

The Wolf and the Lamb

by vivisuu

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Summary: READER / KAGEYAMA "The tyrant will always find a pretext for his tyranny." Kageyama's the wolf, you're the lamb; he's the king and you're his right-hand (wo)man. Medieval!AU and King!Kageyama lie ahead! (Inspiration from Aesop's Fables, from the story of the same name.)

## 1. Chapter 1

\*\*Chapter One: The Meadow of Memories and the Arrogant King\*\*

"Who's there?" You grip your wooden shepherdess's crook tightly.  
"Come out. It's dangerous in the forest and I won't hurt you."

A lanky shadow slowly steps out of the gloom, the sun glinting off the shiny ebony locks. Prussian blue orbs meet yours as the figure steps out into the light.

"Who are you?"

The figure -- a young man, it seems -- shrugs. "I must not be found," he says, almost inaudibly.

"Tell me who you are, please," you murmur, eyes locked on his. "I can't help you if I don't know anything about you."

"(First Name)? (First Name), where are you? I have your lunch for you!"

You turn to look at the voice, watching Shoyo bound up to you and hand you a small tan package before waving and sprinting back towards your village in the distance. There's a rustle behind you as you sigh, putting the bundle down before turning to look at the shadows again.

"Hey, where'd you go? Come back!"

A voice, seemingly out of nowhere, replies, "I can't trust you."

Crook in hand, you wave it around to scare the sheep away from the outskirts of the meadow, lest they wander into the forest beyond. You had enough to worry about; you didn't need a lost sheep added to the mess.

"(First Name)! (First Name)!" A shrill voice calls out.

Turning to the source of the sound, your face breaks into a smile as you recognize the energetic boy-almost-man running towards you a breakneck speed. "Shoyo! What are you doing here?"

Coming to a stop in front of you, the orange-haired boy rests his hands on his knees and hunches over, panting vigorously. You wait patiently until he's recovered enough to say, "The chief wants to talk to you. He said to please come quickly. It's the king!"

The king? What could he possibly want with your small village, much less with you yourself? "Why? Does he personally request me? And who'll watch my sheep?"

"I'll take over from here, (First Name)!"

"No."

"What? Why not?" Shoyo pouts, puffing out his cheeks and acting very childish, not at all like the 19-year-old he really is.

"You and I both know how terrible you are at shepherding. That's why I'm the one herding sheep, not you."

"I'll do a good job, I promise! See? Let me show you!" He grabs the crook from you and jumps up and down, making strange "gwahhh!" sounds. "Besides, aren't you curious about the king visiting?"

You reach out and take hold of the wooden tool, pulling it from his grasp. "I'll admit I am, but I'm more concerned about my sheep."

"Oh, just give me the crook already, (First Name)!" He holds out his hand for it, smirking at you as he does so. "You have to go meet the king! He's so dreamy~"

You mentally facepalm and sigh, "He's only been king for a week and already you're into him way too much. I'm not sure if you're just an enthusiastic fan or if you have a crush on him."

"But he's so cool! C'mon, (First Name), you're a girl â€“ don't tell me you don't think he's handsome!"

You wave your hand in the air, dismissing Shoyo's "fangirling" and starting to walk down the hill, your wolf companion near you.

"Whatever you say, Shoyo, whatever you say. I don't even know what that guy looks like." You hand the shepherd's crook to your friend, saying, "I'm going to go see what's up down in the village. Don't lose any sheep..." Midsentence, you turn to glare at Shoyo, who whimpers under your intense glare. "â€|or else."

\* \* \*

><p>It's dusk when you stride into the village, where you're promptly bombarded by your younger brother, Kai, and dragged by your little sister, Mei, to the chief's home. Pushing you into the house, the two siblings giggle and leave you there alone, bewildered. Your wolf wanders off towards your home.</p>

"Ah, (First Name), it's good to see you." The elderly chief smiles at you and gestures at the tall male sitting to his right. "This is His Royal Highness, King Tobio Kageyama."

"You're the one?" He squints at you and blinks several times in rapid succession. "What's your name?" Onyx bangs hang in his face and navy blue eyes gleam bitterly, sizing you up from head to toe like a prize cut of meat. A gaudy crown sits atop his head and a poppy-red cape adorns his shoulders, white fur lining the collar and bottom of it. He's dressed in sleek black pants and similarly colored leather shoes, matched with a flawlessly alabaster shirt with a spiffy look about it. Kageyama certainly looks the part, but at 19 and having just ascended the throne, the question is: Can he really be the king everyone expects him to be?

"Yes, Your Royal Highness. That's me, (First Name/Last Name)." You stiffen, unimpressed with the regality of his dress. He's probably just another "puppet king," to be manipulated by the "shadow king" and made to do said king's bidding.

"How intelligent are you?" His voice is harsh, cutting straight to the point.

"My intelligence, sir?"

Kageyama turns to the village chief. "Are you sure she's the smartest out of everyone in this village? She can't answer a question without repeating it back to me. If I wanted a parrot, I would have gotten one." You wince.

"Yes, Your Highness, I assure you that she's the brightest there is."

"â€œif you say so." He turns to look at you again, scrutinizing you as you shuffle your feet and stare at the ground. "I feel as though I know you."

"I'm certain I don't know anyone quite like you, Your Highness."

"If I say I recognize you, then I recognize you. There is no argument. Anyways, you are to come to the royal castle with me."

"Why? Chief, you can't allow him to do this! I'm not a thing â€œ he can't take me away as he pleases!"

"I will do with you as I please," the king hisses at you.

"Please go with him, (First Name). It will be good for you to leave this small village," the elder pleads.

You pause, contemplating the notion, then saying softly, "If you insist, Chief. I've always wanted to see the outside world, anyways." You turn to glare at the king, then curtsy mockingly at him. "I will go with you, Your Royal Highness, King Tobio Kageyama," you whisper, your voice seeping with sarcasm and hurt pride.

"Get your stuff ready. We leave at dawn tomorrow." He stands and walks out of the room, into another space you assume is the chief's guest room, where he'll spend the night.

"I'll go, but only because I want to. No one \_orders me around," you say in a soft voice, glaring daggers at the retreating figure of the 19-year-old. "Especially not that arrogant boy king."

After Kageyama disappears, the chief begins to speak. "I'm very sorry to ask you to do this, (First Name), but the king wants a new royal advisor to help him rule the throne. He's going around to all the cities and villages, looking and judging the most intelligent people to choose his advisor from."

"If they're so intelligent, won't they just stab him in the back when he's unaware to steal the crown from him, chief?"

"It seems that way, which is why he wants a younger â€“ but intelligent â€“ person to help him. He said that he thought it'd be the best way to stay in control of the power."

"Stupid boy," you mutter under your breath. "That doesn't even make any sense."

"What was that, (First Name)?" The chief cocks his head in concern. "If you really don't want to go, we can always find someone else, but it'd be hard with such short notice and all."

"No, I'll go. It's alright. Do you know if he'll test the candidates to find the one best fit to be his advisor?"

"He's a rash boy, mind you, (First Name). I don't believe he will, not even if the council elders demand that he do so."

"If he doesn't listen to his elders, who's to say he'll listen to me? Aren't I just a girl?" Your tone drips sarcasm.

"It's just his logic. Please bear with it. You'd better go now; I think you'll need your rest for the ride to the castle tomorrow."

You nod, bowing politely to the chief and walking out of the house. You slouch and sigh as you kick a pebble idly along the dusty road to your home. Picking it up, you feel its heft in your hand and aim for a tree on the outskirts of town. Winding up, you imagine that it's the stupid, arrogant boy-king Kageyama's face plastered on a "Wanted" poster, hanging off the bark. You let the rock fly; it hits its target dead-on.

"Kageyama will never last on the throne, regardless of if he has me or another advisor by his side. That bastard boy-of-a-king. I almost feel sorry for him."

## 2. Chapter 2

### \*\*Chapter Two: A Reluctant Advisor and an Imbecile of a King\*\*

Court ladies swarm the gardens, fanning themselves with delicate silk fans. Their brightly colored, ankle-length dresses catch the sun and make you flinch, unable to look at them for a moment longer. You can hear their high-pitched giggles as they follow the king with their eyes, not bothering to spare you a single glance. Letting go a sigh, you trail the king into the palace.

Inside the king's grand courtroom, it's just you and King Kageyama; his guards and normal posse of people are nowhere to be seen. He seats himself in the throne, throwing his cape over the arm of the chair, his crown cocked precariously on his head. Said male busies himself with fiddling with the arrangement of his cape on his shoulder and a heavy silence falls upon the two of you as you watch him, barely able to suppress your impatience.

"Where are your other advisor candidates?" You break the loud silence, watching the king flinch from your demanding tone.

He recovers quickly, regaining his previous composure, Prussian-blue eyes flashing. "You do not speak unless spoken to first."

You mentally facepalm but nod your head. "Got it, Your Royal Highness. Thank you for enlightening this poor pleb."

His eye twitches but he says nothing.

A deafening silence blankets the room again until he interrupts the silence once more, startling you out of your daydream.

"You're the only advisor I want."

"Pardon?" You barely manage to catch the last part of that sentence.  
"What did you say?"

"Listen closely whenever I speak."

"I shall hang onto your every word, my lord. Please tell me what you just said," you say, mocking the king with your eyes.

He seems to take you seriously and nods, satisfied with your reply.  
"I said, you're the only advisor that I'll ever take on."

You reel back at this news but maintain a calm composure.  
"Alright."

"Do you understand what that means, girl?"

"No, Your Royal Highness."

Kageyama sighs. "You're to accompany me wherever I go."

"What are we, joined at the hip?" You hiss under your breath. "Got it, sir."

"Our first order of business is to go to the front lines and rally the troops," he says out loud. "That'll be in three days. Sugawara

will help you settle in."

A butler appears out of nowhere, bowing to you, his mop of silver-gray hair flopping messily into his face. "I'm Sugawara. You will find that your things have been taken care of and put into your room; the same goes for yourâ€¢" he pauses to think, looking for the right words, then cocks his head and smiles. "â€¢for your wolf companion."

You smile. "Thanks."

Kageyama stands up, bringing the conversation to a dead pause; walking quickly, he strides out of the room. You watch his back disappear into the distance as Sugawara sighs besides you.

"His Royal Highness is very temperamental," he says. "Please take good care of him."

"Is he a baby or something? Am I his nursemaid now, what with this 'please take good care of him' stuff?" You mutter.

"Nothing of the sort. Here, I'll show you to your room."

Grumbling, you follow the butler to the lavish room, modestly furnished but adorned with items only royalty could afford. You plop onto the large bed, hearing it creak and moan under its new weight, and wrinkle your nose at the overpowering floral scent, probably from the vase of roses next to the desk.

"Has anyone lived here in this room?"

"No. His Royal Highness pulled out all the stops for you, my lady," Sugawara replies, smoothing out the wrinkles in the bedspread next to you.

"What's with this 'front lines' thing he was talking about?"

"Did you not know, Miss (First Name)? Karasuno, our kingdom, is at war with our neighboring countries, especially Nekoma. Surely you must've heard of this."

"I'm from the countryside," you mumble sheepishly. Turning to face him, you say, "I have heard of it, but I didn't think it was actually trueâ€¢"

"Here." The male sits on the bed, patting the spot next to him. "Sit up. I'll tell you a little bit about this situation."

"King Kageyama is very ambitious, you seeâ€¢ he's a Napoleon, of sorts." Sugawara laughs sheepishly.

"Napoleon? The guy who wanted world domination?"

Sugawara nods. "Yeah, that guy. The kingdom's army is currently pushing against the kingdom of Nekoma; that's where the front lines are."

"Why Nekoma of all places?"

"Karasuno was always rivals with Nekoma and Kageyama took advantage

of that to go to war with them, my lady. I'll leave the king to tell you everything else. Please, rest â€“ you'll need your strength to manage His Royal Highness."

\* \* \*

><p>"Try to keep up with me, girlie," the king scowls at you. "Can you walk any slower?"</p>

"I'm doing my best, Your Highness," you roll your eyes at him.

"Go faster. Your current effort won't help us win."

"You know what else won't help us win? Your disgusting attitude," you mutter under your breath, soft enough so Kageyama doesn't hear you. You're trotting behind the tall, ebony-haired youth, going two or three steps to match his one long stride, huffing and watching your breath come out in small white puffs. His crimson cape flutters behind him, the fluffy sheep-white lining seemingly floating above the ground and above his patent-leather shoes. The gilded crown lurches precariously on his head, as always. You look to the side and note the evergreen grass, iced with the smallest bits of frost, and the frigid pallor of the entire landscape, rid of any vibrant color.

He suddenly stops in his tracks; you almost crash into him but manage to stop just in time. Mouthing curse words, you sidestep to stand next to him.

"General Sawamura, how's the army doing?"

The general, a tall male with dark hair and even darker eyes, nods at the king and smiles. "We're advancing well enough against Nekoma, Your Highness."

"Where are we? How far are we from storming their royal palace?"

"We aren't that far in yet, sir. It'll take a week, maybe, or two at the most."

"Is that it?" He glares, kicking a stone. The king meets the general's gaze head-on, Prussian-blue pools flashing against taupe orbs. "Make the soldiers stronger! Make them run faster and fight harder! I will not stand for this!" Kageyama barks at Sawamura, who stares back at him, unflinching in spite of the king's anger.

"Your Highness, the soldiers are doing their best."

"That's not enough." He stares at Sawamura, then turns to you abruptly. "Girl."

You start at the suddenness. "Y-Yes?"

"We're going to the front lines. Get my armor and my horse."

"I thought I was an advisor, not a servant," you grumble as you trot towards the encampment, breaking into a run.

\* \* \*

><p>You come back in fifteen minutes, atop your horse and leading the king's horse with you, the latter carrying the heavy armor. "My Lord, His Royal Highness, King Kageyama! I have your horse and your armor; what do you say I do with it?"</p>

"Over here, girl. Took you long enough," he says, motioning at you with an impatient wave of his hand.

"Here you are, sir."

He does nothing, only watching you get down from the horse before saying, "Since you're so dead-set in being an 'advisor' and not just a servant tell me: What do you think of going to the front lines ourselves?"

"Ourselves? As in, I'm going as well?"

"You're my advisor. Of course you're coming."

"Wellâ€|" you tap your chin, thinking. "It'd be dangerous, but it could rally up the troops. We run the risk of injury or even death, butâ€| I think it's worth it. Please don't be too harsh on your soldiers, Your Highness; it's a difficult enough job as it is, both fending off and invading Nekoma."

"Well thought out answer, girl."

"Thank you, My Lord."

"We're returning to the palace." He mounts his horse and rides off towards the camp, not bothering to wait for you.

"That was a waste of effort," you groan. "I got his armor for nothing. Stupid king. He doesn't even listen to me anyways. Why bother even asking me for help? Then againâ€| he'd probably be a burden for the soldiers, seeing as how he may be more liable to be a target for the Nekoma troops to attackâ€| they'd have to defend him and themselves while trying to push back and invade Nekoma." While musing this over, you get on your horse and gallop towards the camp, following the king's trail. "Did he think of that? Is that why he didn't go to the front lines?"

\* \* \*

><p>"Welcome back, Your Highness and my lady," Sugawara greets. "How was your trip?"</p>

The king strides by, not a word said to the butler, but you smile and say, "Somewhat of a waste, but not entirely. I'll tell you about it tomorrow, okay?" You retreat to your room, flopping onto the bed and sighing in relief. "That was exhausting, keeping up with that prude of a king." Turning over onto your side, you close your eyes and try to sleep.

You wake up to a loud rapping on your door. "My lady! My lady! Come quickly! The king â€" it's the king!"

Complaining about that imbecile of a king, you roll out of bed, throw on your clothes, and pull open the door. "What do you want, Sugawara?"

"It's the king, my lady! he's enraged."

"Why is that my problem, exactly?" You roll your eyes for the umpteenth time, exasperated.

"Because! you're his advisor."

"Just because I'm his advisor doesn't mean I'm the go-to person for when he's angry," you complain, rubbing the sleep from your eyes and letting out a yawn while stretching your arms above your head. "What happened to make that idiot so angry?" You cock your head, leaning against the door frame.

"Well, you see!" Sugawara's eyes dart around, unsure of how to drop the bomb, then continues. It's just that! the army's deserted him and left the front lines! oh, and Nekoma's invading."

### 3. Chapter 3

#### \*\*Chapter Three: Impending Invasions and Early Morning Escapes\*\*

You lose your footing, startled from the news, and almost topple over. "Nekoma's invading?! What happened to the army?!"

"I don't know! The king won't tell me anything!" Sugawara says, anxiety in his eyes as he wrings his hands back and forth, glancing at the floor and at the ceiling " anywhere but at you. "Go talk to him! Calm him down, please, my lady " only you will be able to!"

"Why am I the only one who can handle him?"

"I don't know " I get that feeling. That's beside the point, though " go talk to him and calm him down!" Sugawara looks you over. "Maybe put on some regular clothes first before you see him," he says, referring to your current pajama outfit. "He's shut himself in his room, down the hall and to the left. You can't miss it."

You scowl and turn back into your room, closing the door tightly behind you as you change your clothes and dash out the door again, running down the hall towards the king's bedroom.

\* \* \*

><p>Standing before the king's bedroom doorway, you gape in amazement. It's an elegantly carved, mahogany wood frame, complete with peals of flowers and eloquent vines and leaves, topped with a crown at the top. The doorknobs are pure gold, gleaming as they reflect the sun's early morning light streaming in through the narrow, cathedral-like glass window.</p>

You raise a hesitant hand to the door, steel yourself against any possible reprimands from the king, and knock loudly. "King Kageyama? It's (First Name/Last Name). May I come in?"

There's no reply. You try the doorknob and the door slides open easily; you peek in and see the king slumped in a chair and watching the scene out his window.

"Your Royal Highness? I'm coming in." Pushing open the door, you step inside and close the door behind you, making your way to stand behind his chair.

There's a long pause as you stand there, unsure of what to say, until he breaks the silence.

"(Last Name)."

"Yes, my lord?"

He stands up and turns to look at you, a tired look on his face and despondent pleas in his eyes. "What should I do?"

You blink rapidly, unsure of how to answer — he never asked you for advice in such a serious manner before, and you can tell that he isn't joking. You look at him again.

He continues after a long pause. "My army — my army deserted me and Karasuno's unprotected now; we're open to attack and invasion and Nekoma's taken advantage of that. They've broken past the border and are making steady progress towards the castle. The townspeople have left the town near this palace; there's no one within a 25-mile radius of this place. Aoba Jousai is coming as well and there's no one to stop either Nekoma nor Aoba Jousai."

Kageyama stops and looks at you, pleading with his eyes for help. You silently take his hand and guide him to the bed, sitting and patting the spot next to you to invite the king to sit as well. He does so, waiting for your response.

"What happened to your army men?" you ask.

"They've left me. Deserted. Gone."

You blink, then say, "There's nothing for you to do. You're vulnerable and wide-open, susceptible to attack."

"Then what, now? Am I a sitting duck, an easy target for Nekoma and Aoba Jousai to pick off as they so please to?"

"You need to run away."

"Run away? I am Tobio Kageyama, king of the kingdom of Karasuno. I do not run away."

"Then don't consider this as 'running away.' Think of this as escaping the limelight for a bit, laying low and staying safe. You can come back and reclaim the throne later; I think Nekoma's only going to target the castle because that's what you did. You didn't cause chaos and destruction through the countryside."

He raises an eyebrow at this. "And if Nekoma takes control of the kingdom?"

"I'll help you get it back. I'm your advisor, after all, Your Royal Highness."

The king stares off into space, leaving your words hanging in the air

and making you unsure if the king heard you or not. You stare at his side profile, noting his strong jawline and nose, his onyx fringe hanging in his equally dark blue eyes, the soft yet rough outline of his lipsâ€"

"What are you looking at?" His voice startles you, making you jump.

"Nothing."

He grins at you, an evil glint in his eyes. "Are you sure?"

"Y-Yes."

He pushes you down on the bed as he hovers above you, his face inches from your own. "You were watching me."

"Is that a question or a statement?" You blink.

"It's a command."

You study his face, watching the twinkle in his eyes flicker and flash in the harsh light streaming in from the partially closed curtain. Glancing at his lips, you look back at his eyes, Prussian blue pools clashing with deep (eye color) orbs. You open your mouth to say something, but decide against it.

Scowling and reaching up, you pull the king's lanky body to yours in a tight hug, your arms crossing his broad back and softly patting his head. "It's alright, Kageyama."

He says nothing, stiffening instead in your embrace.

"It's okay to be weak sometimes, my lord. Everyone is. You don't have to always be strong all the time, you know â€" I'm your advisor. I'll help you. Rely on me and I'll show you the way."

He slowly pushes himself off of you, getting off of and standing next to the bed. Walking over to the window, he mutters, "Alright."

You smile sadly, knowing in your heart that he won't rely on you as much as he should. Standing up, you make your way towards the door. "I'll bring you to my village â€" you'll be safe there. Let's leave tonight, as soon as night falls."

\* \* \*

><p>It's pitch black outside as you peek your head out the stone door, the yellow warmth of light falling gently upon the dank, cold grassy ground. "King Kageyama?"</p>

A softer voice appears behind you, making you jump. "My lady, what are you doing?"

You turn to look at the speaker, then let out a sigh, reaching down to reassure yourself of your wolf companion next to you, hearing its growling sounds. "Sugawara, it's just you! You gave me a heart attack." Pressing your hand to your heart and feeling it pound, you continue. "Don't tell anyone, butâ€"" you cast a wary glance around

the two of you, then carry on. "I'm bringing the king to my village. Since Nekoma's invaded and apparently Aoba Jousai has, too, it's not safe for him here. He'll be killed." The wolf stiffens but continues to growl softly at the dark expanse of night.

"Do you want him to remain on the throne, Lady (First Name)?" The butler cocks his head to the side, his curious eyes watching you intently.

You shrug. "I'm his advisor; he chose me as so. Therefore, I'm obligated to help him. He trusts me, you know it's sweet, despite how rude he seems."

The butler seems hesitant to believe you, but nods slowly. "Have you finished preparing?"

"Yes. I've got food and the like in this basket," you say, indicating the woven basket hanging from your arm. "We'll carry or wear the clothing we need, and we're dressed like servants so no one suspects anything. The horses are ready I've gotten them and the equipment needed as well."

"And if someone comes upon the two of you running away from the palace?"

"The servants won't know. No one's awake at this hour of the night when they wake up tomorrow, the king will be gone and all chaos will break loose. Sugawara, please let the servants go home safely. Leave the king to me."

Sugawara smiles, nodding. "Understood. And your disguises?"

"He'll pretend to be my deaf, mute cousin who I'm taking home with me I'm a servant escaping from the royal palace. That's understandable, right?"

"Very."

"Then please get the king. Quietly."

\* \* \*

><p>King Kageyama arrives to the servants' exit, grumbling but clutching his crown tightly in his hand.<p>

"Why do you have that crown?" You gesture at the pointy object.

"It's my crown. This is my palace. This is my kingdom."

"Whatever. Give it to me and I'll keep it safe until it's time for you to reclaim the throne; get on your horse and let's go," you say, holding out a hand for the crown.

He opens his mouth but says nothing, choosing not to object and instead quietly hands over the gilded crown. Stepping on the stirrup, Kageyama swings a foot over the horse and mounts as you do the same. Your wolf companion silently takes its place next to your steed.

\* \* \*

><p>The two of you ride through the night, not stopping until dawn peeks over the horizon to take a brief break. You hand him the food and water and he devours it, eating like a wolf gone wild. Laughing softly, you hand him your portion as well without saying a word; he eats it and lets out a sigh, standing up to mount his horse again. Tearing off a piece of jerky, you give it to the faithful wolf alongside you, eating what's left of the jerky.</p>

"We're almost there, my lord," you say, breaking the silence and speaking over the pleasant chirps of songbirds.

"Good."

"The village is right over that ridge over there," you say, pointing over the lush green hills. Your wolf companion runs off towards where you point, heading towards the village first.

"Let's go faster," he grumbles. "I'm tired." He turns and mounts his horse, waiting impatiently as you get atop your steed and embark on the way to the village.

You come across your wolf companion, sleeping soundly before your home. Dismounting from your horse, you take off your hood and lead Kageyama into your house.

"Mom? Dad? I'm home," you say, walking towards the kitchen. "I brought a visitor."

Your siblings run up to you, clamoring around your legs for attention; they glance at Kageyama, the tall stranger you brought with you, and shout excitedly: "(First Name)'s got a boyfriend! (First Name)'s got a boyfriend!"

Flushing a light pink, you bend down and shush the two energetic, gleeful children, pushing them off towards your parents' room to get them. You throw a side glance at the king. "Sorry about that," you mutter.

He looks off to the side, making you unable to see his expression.  
"It's fine."

"You're not really my boyfriend," you mumble, glancing at the kitchen table.

He says nothing in response, simply continuing to look at the side, but it feels like the aura coming from him is slightly darker than it was before.

#### 4. Chapter 4

##### \*\*Chapter Four: Tree Trunks and Apologies\*\*

"Did you find a nice boy to fall in love with in the city? Let me see him!" She reaches out with her hand to tap Kageyama's shoulder, beckoning for him to turn around so she can get a closer look at his face.

"Mom! You might not want to do that," you protest, grabbing her hand

and stopping her before she can touch the king.

"Why not?"

"He'sâ€| he's the king."

Your mother pauses, her eyes wide open and her mouth hanging. "Soâ€| does that mean thatâ€""

"Yeah, it means that you can't touch him unless he gives you permission to," you roll your eyes.

"Noâ€| does that mean that he's the boy you fell in love with, (First Name), and that you brought him back to ask for your father's and my blessing?"

"What?" The king and you shout this in unison, him whirling around to face your mother and you clapping your hand over her mouth before she can say anything else.

"I would never dare even think of courting herâ€""

"You think that I would fall in love with himâ€""

"She's just a mere peasant and my servantâ€""

"He's the frickin' king, mom!"

The two of you scream at your mother, then turn on each other.

"How dare you think that I would love you, girl?!"

"You seemed to like me well enough last night, my lord," you say, rolling your eyes and your tone dripping sarcasm.

"You twoâ€| did \_it \_last night?!" Your mother shrieks, jumping up and down in delight. "When's the child?!"

"What?! Mom, no! Stop! No!"

"Enough of this, you stupid peasant. Take me back to the palace."

"You can't go back there, you idiot," you glare at him.

"And why not? You're my advisor â€" you're supposed to cater to my every whim and will." His navy eyes flash, his mouth set in a firm line.

"I'm also supposed to make sure that you're safe. I promised Sugawara I would."

The king's face seems to fall a bit at the mention of Sugawara.  
"Oh."

You flinch. "Are you alright?"

"Soâ€| you're only taking care of me because you promised Sugawara, is that it?" His tone turns accusatory. "I can't trust you." He turns and storms out of the home, making a beeline for the hills.

Turning to look at your mother, you sigh and run out the door after that imbecile. "Yes, you can! Your Royal Highness, just listen to me! Slow down!"

\* \* \*

><p>You chase him to the meadow where you first met your wolf companion, to the open field where you met the mysterious stranger. Kageyama's punching a tree in his rage, royal blue eyes blazing.</p>

"My lord! Please stop! You'll hurt yourself!" Throwing yourself at him, you grab his fist and pull it from the tree, cradling it in your hand. "You're bleeding, imbecile. Why did you do that?!"

He says nothing in reply, wrenching his hand from your tight grasp to continue his furious attack on the wooden trunk.

"Stop it!" You jump in between the tree and his fist, knowing instinctively that you'll be hit.

The impact of the punch knocks you off your feet, propelling you back against the rough bark of the tree and knocking you off your feet. Your head flies back and hits the trunk, making you see stars for a few moments; you recover quickly, glancing at Kageyama, who has a look of disbelief on his face.

Holding your hurt cheek in your hand, you match stares with Kageyama until he finally breaks the silence, Prussian blue eyes burning into (eye color) pools.

"Why?"

"Because, my king," you say, approaching him. Taking his hand into yours, you kneel with one knee on the ground, much like in a marriage proposal, and kiss his hand softly. Holding it tightly in yours, you say, "I'm supposed to protect you. Not because I promised Sugawara that I'd do it, but because I want toâ€œ because you'd die without me â€œ I know you would. You're such an idiot that you wouldn't last five seconds out there in the real world and I really wonder how you managed to stay on the throne for so long without me, being the stupid bastard you are, but you did it somehow andâ€œ I don't know why," you mumble, letting go of his hand and standing up, taking a step back towards the fringe of the forest.

"I don't know why I did that. Please forget about it," you say and break off eye contact with the male, sprinting past him for the village down the hill.

\* \* \*

><p>It's been a week since that moment. You avoid all contact with the king, obviously failing in your advisory duties, and leave the care of Kageyama to your mother, who fusses over him like a mother hen.</p>

"Sis!"

"Kai?" You look at your little brother. "What's up?"

"That guy â€“ that tall guyâ€œ"

Your ears perk up at the mention of the king. "Wh-What about him?"

"He wants to talk to you, sis," your younger sister Mei interjects.

"Why?" Trying not to flush a light shade of pink, you busy yourself with plucking the petals off a nearby flower.

"Heheh, you'll find out~ He's in the guest room," Kai says, taking his sister's hand and walking off, throwing you side glances all the while, a smirk on his face.

\_He likes meâ€œ| he likes me notâ€œ| he likes meâ€œ| he likes me not, he likes meâ€œ\_ you shake your head, throwing the flower to the side of the road and standing up. You dust off your tunic and skirt and make your way towards your home.

\* \* \*

><p>Summoning up courage, you raise a tentative fist and knock on the door of the guest room. "King Kageyama, Your Royal Highness? It's (First NameLast Name). May I come in? I was told you wanted to talk to me."

"The door's open."

You push open the door and poke your head in. "My lord?"

"Come in."

Taking a step into the room, you look around. He's sitting on the bedspread, his head in his hands, staring at the wall. The window is closed and the curtains drawn tight, the only source of light coming from the flickering candle on the small desk next to the bed.

"What's wrong?" You sit next to him, leaving a bit of space between the two of you.

He looks at you, then looks down at his hands clasped in his lap. "Iâ€œ|" His knuckles turn white and his hands tremble

You lay a hand on his knee and nod, waiting for him to continue. "It's alright, my lord. You can trust me."

He exhales loudly, mumbling, "I'm sorry."

## 5. Chapter 5

\*\*Chapter Five: What do You Want, My Royal Highness?\*\*

\_I'm sorry.\_

The two simple words keep circling in your mind.

The color drains from your face and you sit there on the bed, your fixed gaze on Kageyama's face. You slowly look down at your hands sitting in your lap, blinking several times as you do so, inhaling and exhaling loudly.

You're vaguely aware of the king waving his hand in your face, peering into your face as he says your name over and over again, but all you see are the off-white curtains blocking the view of the outdoors. You stand up, startling the king; he falls backwards, only to watch you take slow, cautious steps to pull open the drapes and fling open the curtains.

A brisk spring breeze whips into the room, hesitantly at first, then all at once. The curtains ruffle in the wind behind you as you gaze out the window, glancing at the dancing flowers in the wind and the sturdy trunks of trees. The grass seems greener than it was yesterday.

\_I'm sorry. \_

That's all you hear.

"(First Name)â€| I'm sorry."

\_(First Name), I'm sorry.\_

Your back to the king, you allow yourself a small smile as you watch two squirrels underneath a tree, one chasing the other, the object of its affections.

\_(First Name), I'm sorry.\_

Slowly turning around to face Kageyama, you stand in front of him, a soft smile dancing on your lips as you watch him fidget on the bed.

"What for, My Royal Highness?" You blink slowly, looking at him through your lashes. A grin tugs on your lips but you try to keep a straight face.

He blinks several times, then looks away, not wanting to meet your gaze. "Forâ€| "

"For?"

"Why did you say 'My Royal Highness?' Isn't the phrase 'Your Royal Highness'? And yet you call me an idiot."

You cock your head and raise a finger to your lips, letting the aforementioned grin pull your lips into a small "u" shape. "Whatever are you sorry for, My Royal Highness?"

"Enough of this!" He bolts upwards, quick enough to take you off guard and make you jump a bit. "I said I was sorry â€" can't you accept it like a normal person?"

You look at him sideways, the happy expression gone and replaced with a displeased frown. "Normal person?"

"You're parroting what I'm say again."

"And what's wrong with that? It's a simple question; I use it to get people to elaborate since I don't speak the language of idiots." You clip your words, letting the subtle insult sink in as understanding and recognition dawn upon the king.

Kageyama grabs you by the shoulder, his seething, sharp glare equivalent to that of ice. Scowling, you match him, stare for stare. His vice grip on your shoulder tightens, but you refuse to let the fact that he's hurting you show on your face, maintaining your perfect poker face.

The two of you stand like that for what seems to be eternity. You heave a sigh and close your eyes, breaking off the intense staring contest.

"What do you want from me, Kageyama?"

You wait for his response, watching his eyes flick to the top left corner, then top right â€“ everywhere but straight in your eyes. His grip loosens and the former king lets go of you, stepping back a little.

"Iâ€¦ don't know."

\* \* \*

><p>At the dinner table, the aura is frosty. Your mother notices but says nothing, instead making idle, loud conversation, her voice the only sound ringing throughout the household.</p>

"Oh, (First Name), these are the greens you picked earlier today!"

Your body hunched over your plate, you stab said vegetables; Kageyama, who's sitting across from you, winces from the sound of your silverware hitting the porcelain plate. Scraping sounds ensue as you push your rice onto your spoon.

"Kai, Mei, do you want some more rice?" Your mother asks.

Your younger siblings quickly shake their heads, picking their plates up and making a beeline out the door towards your wolf companion, seen lollygagging outside through the door that's hanging ajar. You ignore them and continue to eat, the occasional sharpness of metal hitting china accentuating the roughness of your utensils scraping against said porcelain.

A heavy silence falls on the room, your mother watching the two of you with concern. She eats slowly, her eyes never leaving your face. Her eyebrows wrinkle, causing a crease in her forehead.

Your mother finally takes notice of the king's plate, food still untouched, and pounces upon it, eager to start up the fallen conversation.

"Eat up, King Kageyama! There's plenty to go around. It may not be the palace fare you're used to," your mother shrugs sheepishly, almost apologetically, "but there's definitely a home cooked taste to it! I hope you like itâ€""

"Stop it."

"(First Name)?" Your mother turns to look at you sharply. "What's wroâ€?"

"Just stop it, mother." You drop your utensils next to your plate, the loud clang resonating throughout the dining table. A grain of rice is left on the tip of the fork. Slamming your hands down on the table covered with the "tablecloth for guests," you stand and push your chair away from the table, still hunched over your plate.

You grab your plate and stalk over to the door. Dropping your plate onto the table, you mutter, "Thanks for the food." The door slams behind you, leaving only your mother and Kageyama at the table.

"Well, that was eventful, wasn't it?" Your mother claps her hands together and forces a smile on her face, turning to Kageyama as she does so.

The former king sighs, head in his hands. "Where did I go wrongâ€?!"

\_I'm sorry.\_

\_ (First Name), I'm sorry. \_

You kick a stone off the side of the dirt road. "Sure you're sorry, you damn bastard. Sorry for what? Dragging me from my peaceful life in the village, from my happy sheep-tending days to serve you as an 'advisor' â€" was it worth the effort?"

Hugging yourself, you inhale and exhale, trembling with fury. "Sorry for what, you sorry excuse for a king? Oh, right, I forgot â€" you're just an excuse of a king, a figurehead only to be manipulated and easily overthrown, like knocking the king's piece over in a simple game of chess."

Suddenly, your shoulder is grabbed from behind and you whirl around, fire blazing in your eyes.

Prussian blue endless depths lurk in stark contrast to the scorching heat in your (eye color) orbs.

"What do you want from me?"

He says nothing. You note the slight rise and fall of his chest, the sparse coloring in his cheeks, the ruffled, disheveled shape his clothing and his hair are inâ€; he must have run like crazy to catch up to you. Taking in his slightly parted lips and his frantic eyes, his onyx hair rumpled and his fingers forming a tight fist, you sigh.

"Iâ€!"

"You what?"

"I'm sorry."

I'm sorry.

"(First Name), I'm sorry," he says, eyes downcast on the dusty road.

(First Name), I'm sorry.

"What do you want from me, Your Royal Highness?"

He notices the subtle switch from "my" to "your," his heart falling a bit. "I want to rebuild Karasuno."

"And?"

He glares at you. "What?"

"What do you want me to do about it, hmm, fallen king?" A crow flies overhead and you trace its path with your eyes, a detail not gone unnoticed to Kageyama.

"I need your help."

You stare at him. An uncomfortable silence falls, stuck between your intense, heated gaze and the king's fidgeting and squirming under your gaze.

You throw back your head and laugh loudly as the king looks at you, eyes open wide in surprise.

You had been pushed to your limits before, a sheep stalked by the predator wolf. Licking your lips, you look straight at the king; in the midst of all the chaos before, you had forgotten. A king piece, by itself, would fall almost instantly, but a king piece with the proper help and defensive actionsâ€| a checkmate would be practically impossible then.

And even if it was game over once, even if your backs are against the wall with nowhere to go, even if Kageyama is made to give up his throne againâ€| you can always start another round.

You curl your lip and smirk. "I'll help you, and you know what else?"

He looks at you. You can practically hear him yelling at you, "Just tell me, girl!" but all that greets your ears is silence. Uninterrupted, you continue.

"I'll help you, and I will succeed in getting you back on that royal seat of yours, My Royal Highness. Because you know what? Checkmate's going to be impossible this time around."

## 6. Chapter 6

\*\*Chapter Six: Trees, Trees Galore\*\*

You spend the days with the king idly, the passing time making you grow closer to Kageyama. He gets to know your family and your siblings, all of whom adore him and make unhelpful winks at you whenever they see the two of you around.

"Hey, Kageyama!"

"What?" He scowls.

"Turn that frown upside down! Let's play a game!" Grinning cheekily at the tall male, you stick out both arms and twirl around in the meadow, fresh blades of grass waving slowly in the warm breeze.

He frowns. "A game? Which one?"

"Hide and seek! You close your eyes and count to twenty while I hide â€“ you have to look for me!" You squeal and run off towards the woods, your (hair length) (hair color) hair the last thing he sees before he closes his eyes, a faint smile tugging at his lips.

"Oneâ€| twoâ€| threeâ€|"

Scrambling up a tree, you perch yourself on a branch and suppress a giggle at the king's mumbling.

"Eighteenâ€| nineteenâ€| twenty! (Last Name), I'm coming for you!" He shouts and opens his eyes, chasing after your path into the forest.

You watch him, a gleam in your eyes as you sit on your branch, legs dangling a solid fifteen feet above the ground. Delighting in your view of the frantic king's searching, you let out a small laugh and swing your feet back and forth like a pendulum.

The ebony-haired male starts, eyes alert and looking for where your giggle came from. He soon makes a beeline for your tree, looking around it before scratching his head, not failing to notice your shoes next to the tree trunk. Kageyama searches the area multiple times, your laugh ringing through the forest and his ears before he runs both hands through his hair, scrunching up his eyebrows in the process.

Finally relenting, you swing your legs up so that they rest on the tree branch and grin. "Up here, you big dolt!"

He jerks upwards, searching for you; when he finally finds you, Kageyama glowers. "How'd you get up there?"

"Why don't you try it? There's enough space for the both of us~" you beckon at him with a hand gesture and an inviting smile.

Deciding to say nothing, the former king stares at you for a moment. He slowly approaches the trunk as he raises a hand to slowly rub his chin, trying to analyze it before doing his best to scale it. You stifle your laughter as you watch him attempt and fail, multiple times, to climb said tree.

"Shut up!" you hear him growl, looking away.

"What? I'm not laughing!" you protest, but both he and you know you are. "Here, put your leg on this branch and hoist yourself up to that branch. Good, you're almost there. Reach upwards and grab onto this one sticking out here â€“ yeah, that's good. Here. Take my hand."

He takes your outstretched hand and you pull him up a couple more inches so he can grab the top of the branch you're sitting on; pushing himself upwards, he eventually makes it to sit next to you.

Swinging your legs so that they dangle over one side of a branch only, you turn to grin at him. "That was fun, right?"

He frowns. "Did I win?"

"You mean the hide and seek?"

Kageyama nods. "Did I win, (Last Name)?"

"Yup. You found me!" You look over at him, smiling. "Look, the sun's setting."

"It's kind of hard to see it over the tree line."

"Spoilsport."

\* \* \*

><p>"Here, eat up! There's plenty to go around!"</p>

The fifth or so dinner since your awful confrontation with Kageyama, you pass the food around the table to him, the previous fight seemingly forgotten. He sits next to you, nodding as he accepts the plate and spoons the food into his bowl.

The room is silent, the only sound that of silverware clinking against the good china — but the silence is pleasant, not at all oppressive and angry like the one before. You inhale deeply, relishing the smell of your mother's home cooking as your siblings are reluctantly force-fed vegetables by your mother. You watch the two of them complain, then look out the door at your wolf-companion, who seems to have disappeared every time you were with Kageyama.

"Kai, Mei, time for bed!" Your mother calls, taking their plates and ushering them off towards their rooms.

Noticing a strange expression on Kageyama's face, you look at him. "What's wrong?"

He wrinkles his nose, stubbornly yet slowly forcing a piece of broccoli into his mouth. "Nothing."

You peer into his face. "Are you sure?"

He nods, glaring at the small green trees on his plate. "Yeah."

Tracing his gaze to the large pile of broccoli heaped up on one side, the only thing left on his plate, you smile. "Don't like broccoli?"

He ignores your question, spearing another piece and forcing it into his mouth.

You watch him eat the green vegetable until there's only a few left, then you call your mother over. "Mom! I think Kageyama would like some more broccoli. He's eating all of it!" You beam at him.

"No thanks," he mutters.

"What's that? You don't want it, Kageyama?" You cock your head and look at him curiously, a twinkle dancing in your eye as you feign a pout. "You don't like my mother's cooking?" Your mother turns to look at him as well, a critical look on her face.

He becomes flustered and shakes his head, saying, "No, it's not thatâ€" "

"Then what is it?" You wink at your mother, reaching across the table for the broccoli dish. "Excuse us for a moment, Kai, Mei, mother, father."

Giving you a knowing smile, your mother ushers your two siblings and your father, who protests at the loss of his dinner, out of the house. "Let's go for a walk, darling! Kai and Mei, you two come too." She winks at you before she turns away and leaves.

"See you later, guys!"

"Can I go with them?"

"No, My Royal Highness. You need to eat your broccoli," you say, spooning piece after piece of broccoli onto his plate.

"I don't want to," he murmurs, eyes downcast as he glares at his plate.

"Why not?"

"I'm not in the mood for broccoli," he responds, turning up his nose at the vegetables.

"Do you not like them?" you inquire, spearing a piece off his plate and eating it, his gaze aghast at your brazen action.

"That was my broccoli!" He protests, grabbing his fork and stabbing a piece of your broccoli in retaliation. Then, thinking better of it, he discards it back on your plate and dumps his broccoli on your dish, too.

"What was that for?!"

"You seem to like broccoli."

"And how can I get you to like broccoli?"

"I only like it when it's given to me in a certain way," he snickers, thoughts of broccoli in gold platters dancing in his mind. There's no way you would have solid gold platters, the dishes of kings!

You tap your chin for a few moments, looking thoughtful before you stab a small green tree aggressively. Chewing on it slowly, your eyes light up and you slowly, gently, spear another piece.

He watches you, eyes analyzing your motions. "What are you doing?"

"Say 'ahhhh,' Kageyama," you say, holding out the broccoli in front of his mouth. You wave it in the air before him, eyes twinkling as you hold in a laugh, shoulders barely shaking.

He scowls. "Noâ€"

You take that moment to shove the broccoli in his mouth, making him chew and eat it entirely before you smile and nod approvingly. "Good job! It wasn't that hard, was it?"

He glares at you. "It was the challenge of the gods."

You grin at him, spearing another piece and blowing on it as if to cool it down. "Say 'ahhh' again!"

Frowning in distaste at you, he opens his mouth and you place the broccoli there. You repeat the process many times until the broccoli is gone.

"See? It wasn't that hard," you laugh. "Now do you like broccoli?"

"Was that your fork, (Last Name)?"

You nod, cocking your head to one side. "Yeah, why?"

Turning to look at you, Kageyama slowly raises a hand to his lips, then glances back at the table and lets his head fall into his hands. "Oh, dear godâ€!"

Your eyes widen as you realize what he's thinking. "Did we justâ€ did we just do what I think we just did?"

He nods, eyes frozen on the table. "You idiot of an advisor."

"You went along with it."

"But I obviously didn't like it."

"But you obviously did, since you were smiling the whole time."

"I was not! I was grimacing at the awful taste of broccoli the whole time."

"Admit it, you liked it," you say, crossing your arms and glaring at him. "You liked me feeding you broccoli." His cheeks flush lightly as you realize what you said, and you look away. "That sounded better in my head," you murmur. "Forget it."

"Yeah, I did like it," he murmurs, staring at the wooden table.

"What?"

"Nothing."

## 7. Chapter 7

### \*\*Chapter Seven: Just Motherly Things\*\*

"You're awfully impatient," you remark, watching the former king struggle to put on his jacket. He pulls the royal blue fabric this way and that, stretching it while failing to pull the sleeve out. Raising an eyebrow, you hide a snicker; Kageyama turns to glare at you briefly before returning his attention to the sleeve.

"Here, give me that!"

"No, I got it."

"No, you obviously don't 'got it.' Give me that," you say, holding out a hand.

"No."

"Give me it."

"No."

You smack him lightly on his head, scowling. He winces in pain but tightens his clutch on the jacket, knuckles turning white. "You stupid king!" Why am I even helping you?"

He looks at you, unsure of where you're going.

"I swear, I'm supposed to be your advisor, but what use is that if you're not even going to let me help you?"

"No, I will let you help me!"

"This idiotic boy of a king can't even put on his own jacket without help and he expects me to just stand by and not do anything about it," you glower, snatching the fabric from his hands when he least expects it.

"Hey!"

"Shut up. We'll fix it together, since if I fix it for you, you'll still be unable to do it yourself next time," you say, holding out the jacket. "See, the sleeve's inside out."

"So?"

"So reach in and grab the sleeve and pull it out!"

"And that'll straighten out the sleeve?"

"It's inside out right now. If you pull it out, it'll be back to normal," you say, demonstrating with one sleeve.

He extends a hand and reaches inside gingerly, slowly pulling out the cloth. His mouth forms a small O when you hold up the clothing, restored to its original form with no strange inside-out sleeves.

"Patience is a virtue, Kageyama."

"I know."

"It'd do you good to have some once in a while, My Royal Highness," you snicker. "You would've ripped up your beautiful jacket otherwise."

He glares at the disobedient material.

You hold up the jacket and gesture for him to turn around. "Here, put it on."

Remaining silent, he turns and slowly stretches out an arm, letting you work the sleeve onto his extended limb. You do the same with the other arm and he turns around, pulling on the front of the jacket to straighten it out.

"You look good," you murmur, stepping back to look at him from afar.

"What?"

Playing with the hem of your shirt, you sigh. "I said, the stupid child who can't put on his coat by himself looks good," you repeat, eyes fixed on the jacket. You can feel your cheeks start to heat up indiscernibly, but you avoid all eye contact.

\* \* \*

><p>"I don't think he likes you, Kageyama," you remark offhandedly, gazing at your wolf companion who's on all four haunches, snarling at the male next to you.</p>

His eyes twitch as he tries to suppress a frightening glare, eyebrows furrowing and onyx hair falling in his face. "Why not?"

The wolf snaps at Kageyama, but doesn't lunge in his direction. You breathe a sigh of relief, grateful that the animal didn't attack the king. "He doesn't like bad people," you murmur, eyes locked with your wolf's.

He stiffens. "Badâ€| people?"

You nod, keeping a straight face. "He especially hates liars and arrogance."

Glancing at him out of your peripheral vision, you see that the male's gone pale, eyes bulging slightly from his face. He takes a step back as his cheeks whiten and his face becomes drawn.

You lay a light hand on his arm, turning to look at him. "I'm kidding, My Royal Highness," you whisper, looking him in the eye. "He does this to everyone."

"Are you sure?"

"Yes, really. He bit me the first time he met me in a meadow," you shrug. "Come to think of it, there was a weird guy in the forest." Squatting, you reach down and pat the wolf's head; you pull at

Kageyama's arm to make him crouch next to you.

He suddenly flinches, as if slapped. "Weird guy?"

"Yeah, a weird guy," you mutter absentmindedly, twirling a lock of the animal's ebony fur in your fingers. "He looked at me quickly, but it was strange."

"How so?"

"Why are you so curious about this mystery man?" You turn to look at the former king, a twinkle dancing in your eye.

"Because I am."

"So?"

"Damn it, woman, answer me!"

"Fine, fine, no need to yell," you wince at his harsh tone. The wolf shrinks back as well. "He said something about not being able to trust me, though I have no idea why you would trust a complete stranger." The grass sways in the wind as your wolf companion breaks free of your hold and trots away, off towards the direction of the village. You plop yourself down on the ground and play with the grass, weaving a small ornamental pattern with the sunny blades. Glancing up, you watch the crows overhead fly about, circling the village area.

You realize that the king hasn't answered you, and you turn to look at him. "Are you going to respond, my lord?"

He shakes his head. "No, it's just... well, never mind. It's nothing." Standing up to reach his full height, he mutters to himself and walks off towards the village.

"Wait for me!"

\* \* \*

><p>"(First Name)!" Your mother's voice makes you turn around. "Oh, I'm glad I found you â€“ Kai and Mei are sick, and I have to go to the market! Could you watch them for today?" Her eyebrows furrow in worry, mouth pointing downward in a desperate frown.<p>

You slap a hand over Kageyama's mouth and nod, smiling. "Of course. I'll get Kageyama to help me, too!" Waving goodbye to your mother as she reluctantly heads down the road, glancing back every so often, you seat the king on a wooden chair and glare down at him.

"The twins are sick."

"I can tell," he glowers.

"I'll need your help to care for them."

"I'll consider it."

"That wasn't a request," you say.

"But that was my answer."

"Fine. Do I have to do this the hard way?" You grab the male by the hand and drag him into the twins' bedroom, where your wolf companion is curled up between their matching beds. "Oh, so that's where Shadow went!"

"It has a name?"

"Don't be mean to Shadow!" Mei cries, stifling a cough. "Shadow is sensitive. Don't listen to that big mean man," she sniffles.

Kageyama turns to whisper to you, "They were awake?"

"Well, now we are," Kai mutters, glaring daggers at the king.

"Sorry," you sigh. "Anyways, Kageyama and I are here to care for you!"

"Achoo!"

You hurriedly pass a handkerchief to your little sister and press a hand to her forehead, clucking like a mother hen. "I'll make both of you some soup. My Royal Highness, watch over them!"

"Wait, whaâ€" Don't just leave me here!" He protests weakly as you speed out the door, heading towards the kitchen.

As you stir the broth and pour it into two small bowls, you hear loud barks, clanging, and crashing coming from the twins' room.

You kick open the door, hands balancing the two bowls and the accompanying spoons. "Kageyama! I told you to watch over them!"

Your eyes skim over the scene in front of you as you pause in your lecturing, barely suppressing your twitching eyebrow. Shadow is collapsed on top of Kageyama's back, with Mei patting his head; Kai is seated on top of Shadow, and Kageyama's expression is one of pain.

"Oh dearâ€| Kai, Mei, are you alright? Here, get back in bed," you say, placing the bowls on the dresser and helping the twins back into their respective beds. Handing them their broth, you glance down at Kageyama, who seems to be knocked out.

"Great. One more problem to deal with," you mutter.

"Achoo!" Both twins sneeze at once.

"Where'd those handkerchiefs go?!" You gasp as you dig through the dresser drawers in search of the elusive scraps of cloth. "Damn it, Kageyama!"

"Yes?" a groggy voice pipes up from behind you.

"It's about time you came to! Help me find some handkerchiefs!" You grab one from the drawer you found and dab at your sibling's forehead, cooing.

"Be careful you don't get sick." Kageyama drifts by you to the dressers to grab more cloth for the twins.

\* \* \*

><p>"Achoo!" You rub your nose, wrapping yourself into a cocoon of blankets on your bed.<p>

"See? I told you you'd get sick."

"I'm not sick! Achoo!"

"So says the sneezing child," Kageyama sighs, sitting down next to you.

"Shut up," you glower at him.

## 8. Chapter 8

### \*\*Chapter Eight: Tea with a Side of Trust\*\*

"I'm so sorry to have to ask you to do this, Kageyama, but the twins have school, (First Name) is sick, I have to go to the market again, and her father has to go work at the smithy! Could you please watch over her?" Your mother bows over and over again to the former king, hair falling into her eyes as she pleads with him. "I know you're the former king and you're probably not used to taking care of others, but all she really needs is just someone to make sure she rests!"

The tall male waves both hands in front of his chest, grimacing. "Uh, I guess I could do it," he mumbles, scratching the back of his head. "Stop bowing to me, though â€“ I'm not a king anymore," he frowns. "It's not really all that much trouble, and I wouldn't have anything to do, anyways."

"If you don't watch over (First Name), she's definitely going to get up and overexert herself while she's still sick! Please, I'm begging you, take care of her!"

"Okay, okay! I got it! I'll do it!" he snaps at her, if only to get her to shut up. Seeing her hurt look, he flinches and apologizes, mentally reprimanding himself for being so snarky. \_If (First Name) saw this, she'd call me a pissy boy king again, then she'd hit me on the head. \_He smiles at the thought and reassures your mother that he'll take care of you; ushering her out the door with a quick farewell, he turns on his heel and heads for your room.

"Kageyama?" You open a tired eye to look at who just entered your room. "Is that you?" Trying to sit up, you're promptly bombarded by a stray pillow; you wince in wolf sleeps peacefully next to your bed.

"Stay in bed."

"Butâ€"

"I said, stay in bed." Marching over to you, Kageyama sits next to

you. You notice how his eyebrows form a small 'V' as he peers at you.

"I have to work!"

"'I have to work,' she says," he mimics, eyebrows furrowing upwards and mouth forming an upside-down triangle, the bags under his eyes creasing ever so slightly as he does so.

"That's an ugly face," you say. "Try smiling; maybe you won't make me want to puke." Hacking loudly into your arm, you continue. "I do have to work, though."

"What exactly do you have to do?"

"I have to herd my sheep."

"Can't anyone else do it?"

"No." You glare at the boy, who sighs.

"I saw that peppy ginger before, when I visited. He seemed super excited about herding your sheep. What about him?"

"No. Definitely not Shoyo â€“ anybody but him."

"Shoyo it is. Where's your wooden stick thing? That thing you wave around at the sheep with."

"You don't even listen to me! What's the point of talking? And that wooden thing's called a crook, you idiot."

"Yeah, that. Where is it?"

"Not telling you."

"Fine. I found it anyways." He grabs your crook, which was leaning against the bedroom wall, and leaves your bedroom.

\* \* \*

><p>"Look who I brought back," Kageyama announces as he strides back into your room.</p>

Immediately trailing after him like a lovesick puppy is Shoyo, clutching your wooden crook tightly in his hands. "(First Name), are you okay?!" He makes a beeline for your bed, but luckily, the former king's arm stops him in his tracks.

"She's sick. If you get sick from her, there'll be nobody to watch the sheep and she'll get all pissy again," he says.

"You're making that face again, Kageyama," you mutter, watching the ginger try to wrestle his way out of the taller male's iron grip.

"What face?" The onyx-haired male looks at you.

"That face. The one you made when you imitated me. The ugly one."

Kageyama is distracted by the ginger's quick dash over to where your wolf is lying on the ground, its watchful eyes tracking the shorter boy's every move.

"C'mon, Shadow! Let's go herd sheep!" Shoyo cheers happily as you wince from his loud voice.

"Tone it down a bit, would you? You're giving me a headache," you say, pressing two fingers to your temples and releasing a loud sigh.

"Sorry, (First Name)," he says, shrinking back a bit. "But you can trust me â€“ remember how good of a job I did last time herding your sheep?"

"More like how good of a job Shadow did herding them while you made weird sounds and jumped in the air," you say, turning around and fluffing your pillow up more.

"How'd you knowâ€?"?!"

"You're Shoyo. I don't need to know; it's really obvious what you'd do. I watched you once, remember? Now get out. My sheep will wander off if you don't leave now," you say, waving a hand at the boy.

"Kageyama, show him out. And get me some tea on the way back, would you? Be a dear."

The former king grumbles as he shoves Shoyo out the door, crook in hand and Shadow in tow.

He returns with a mug of tea and gives it to you, who sips it. "Can you add some sugar in it? It's in the top left cabinet. You shouldn't have any trouble reaching it, since you're so tall."

Kageyama walks out with the mug of tea, muttering something about adding salt into it instead of sugar.

"If you're going to add salt in it, the salt's in the top right cabinet!" you call after him, suppressing a smile.

\* \* \*

><p>He comes back with the same mug of tea, wordlessly shoving it at you.</p>

You take a sip and smile. "It's perfect. Thanks."

"Anything else you need, my queen?" he mocks, looking at you with his "ugly face," as you've so dubbed it.

"Yeah. I'd love it if you could stop making that ugly face. It's making me sick," you say, drinking your tea. Closing your eyes, you suppress a girly giggle â€“ he called you his queen, even if he meant it mockingly.

The boy grudgingly obeys and changes his facial expression to a more neutral one. "Kings are supposed to be on top; I'm not supposed to obey anyone," he grumbles. "I'm the \_king.\_"

"Yeah, kings don't obey anybody save for food, wine, and their wives," you mutter while rolling your eyes. "I think I'm delirious right now. Would you leave? I'm going to sleep." Handing your mug to the reluctant boy king, you pull the covers up and turn over to face the away from the king. Rolling around a bit, you become a (First Name)-burrito with the blankets.

\_Kings don't obey anybody save for food, wine, and their wivesâ€œ!  
\_Kageyama watches your body slowly rise and fall as you breathe, falling asleep. \_Does that make you my wife? \_

The king walks around to the other side of the bed and sits, watching you sleep. \_(First Name)'s kind of cuteâ€œ! \_He leans over and kisses your forehead, then pulls away suddenly, cheeks reddening as he realizes what he subconsciously did. \_Nobody saw that. I didn't do that. \_Standing up suddenly, he walks out of the room, shutting the door quietly behind him. He leans against the wall and sinks down to sit on the floor. \_I wasn't thinking. I shouldn't have done that. This just complicates everything. \_His forehead resting in the palm of his hand, he slams a fist down on the floor.

\* \* \*

><p>"Thank you so much for taking care of (First Name)! She's all better now, thanks to you!" Your mother shakes the king's hands over and over again, smiling up at him.<p>

"It was no big deal," he mutters, cheeks flushing a soft pink as he looks away. "I didn't really do much."

"But you were still there for her! Oh, (First Name), can you get Shoyo to cover for you tomorrow?" Your mother turns to talk to you, tearing herself away from the king and walking over to you.

"Why? What for?"

"The village chief heard you're back and he's coming over to say hi," she says. "Make sure you get the tea ready, okay?"

"I've been here for over a week. It's a bit late, isn't it, popping in now?"

"The chief's a busy man!" She wags a finger at you. "I think his wife might be coming over again, too."

"His wife? What for?"

"She heard you were Kageyama's advisorâ€œ" she motions with her head towards the king, who looks at the two of you after hearing his name, "â€œand she wanted to stop by to say hi after she heard you were back."

"Alright. I'll tell Shoyo to watch my sheep again," you mutter, standing up and opening the door so your wolf companion can run outside into the dusk again. "Make sure you come back safely, Shadow!" you call after the wolf as you follow him outside and make a beeline for Shoyo's house.

\* \* \*

><p>"(First Name), how great to see you again!" The village chief, a short, elderly, portly man, trots into your home, followed by his equally rotund wife. Both have salt-and-pepper hair, and smell distinctly of herbs and whatnot. "How have you been?"</p>

"I've been lovely, and you? Can I take your coats?" You hold out a hand, taking the chief's and his wife's coats and hanging them on two chairs.

"My wife and I have been well. How was being an advisor with the king? I see you've brought him home with you," he chortles as he examines the king, who's standing away from the three of you and glaring at the ground. "I guess it didn't turn out too well at the castle towards the end."

"Nope, it wasn't exactly the most peaceful time there," you laugh with him. Kageyama flinches at the implications of your words and plastered on a thin smile, thoughts running through his head like 50 Shoyo clones, all high on sugar. He watches you all the while, and when you glance at him, he looks away and stares at the ground.

"Tea?"

"Of course," his wife interjects. "Dear, didn't you want to talk to the king before? Alone?"

"Oh, yes! Of course. Your Royal Highness â€“ well, I guess I should just call you Mr. Kageyama since you're not the king anymore â€“ what do you say we sit down at the table?"

"I'll get you some tea," you say, making your way into the kitchen and bringing out the tea kettle with cups out to the dining table, the drinks having been prepared in advance for their visit.

"(First Name), dear, do you have anywhere private we can talk?"

"What is it?" You look at her as you carry the tray with cookies out, piling some onto two plates and handing one to her, holding the other.

"I need to tell you something. Darling, I'm going to talk to (First Name), alright?" She says, waving to her husband before pulling your arm and leading you out of the kitchen.

The two of you wind up in your room, with the door closed.

"What's wrong?" You can smell the strong scent of ginger wafting off of her person. Fighting the urge to wrinkle your nose, you watch her quietly.

She leans towards you, eyes full of concern as the cookie plate trembles on her lap. "Be careful of men like Kageyama. Men like him, they're always plotting something."

You burrow your eyebrows together. "What do you mean? He's hardly a teenage boy, much less a man," you scoff. "Plus, he's so idiotic, he couldn't possibly be plotting anything."

The elderly lady shakes her head frantically. "I've seen his type. I know it. Take some advice from me, please" he's going to hurt you in the end. He's, he's like, like, like!" gesticulating wildly with her hands, she purses her lips, thinking. "He's like a wolf!"

"A wolf? That's impossible. Wolves are far more aggressive than him. Plus, they're more capable and self-dependent. That boy can barely put on a jacket by himself." You let out a small laugh, remembering, and she chuckles as well, imagining the sight.

"In all seriousness, (First Name), that's not what I meant." Her eyes have stopped smiling and her mouth is set in a frown as she sits up straighter. "Be careful around him."

"Like I said, what do you mean?"

She sighs. "You act like he trusts you a lot, and you, him." Holding up a hand before you can interrupt her to protest, she continues. "I haven't seen you two interact, but you're a lot happier nowadays with him around, compared to before."

"Well, before was when I was unwillingly dragged off to court to act as some advisor."

"No, before that, on a day-to-day basis. But that's beside the point. And he seems more comfortable, too, compared to when he stayed at our home. He actually smiles and he watches you all the time."

"What are you trying to say?" You pop a cookie into your mouth and watch the old lady curiously, unperturbed.

"When Kageyama was staying at our home before, when he was actually king, he said something strange. I think it was something along the lines of, 'I can't trust you.'"

You start, eyes widening. "What? Sorry, go on."

"He said something like 'I can't trust you' and then ran off. That sweet butler of his" I don't know how that man puts up with him "Suga, was it? Suga found him and brought him back later that day, around mid-afternoon or some time like that."

Your mouth is hanging open now as you revisit the forest, back to the fateful day where you were told of your appointment to the position of advisor to the king. \_I can't trust you\_ that's what that weird guy in the forest said. Was that\_ was that\_?

You're brought out of your thoughts by a soft, wrinkly hand resting on your knee. Raising your head to look at the village chief's wife, who's watching at you, you force a wan smile onto your face.

"Be careful, (First Name). I will never forgive him if he hurt you."

After seeing the village chief and his wife off, you turn to Kageyama. "What'd he talk to you about?"

"I think he's happy for me for settling in." \_'I'm happy for you two!' is what he really said, but you don't need to know that. \_He frowns. "What about you and his wife?"

"Oh. Well, nothing much, really. Just catching up. She's a lovely lady. Say, My Royal Highness, have you ever been to the forest?"

"The forest?"

"Yeah, the one surrounding the glade where I graze my sheep."

The former king reaches out for a cookie from the plate sitting on the table, popping it into his mouth and chewing slowly.

"Yeah."

"Oh?"

"Yeah."

"Were you the one who said you couldn't trust me, so long ago?"

"(First Name)! (First Name)!" The twins come barreling into the room, swarming around you and Kageyama.

\_We'll finish this later, \_you mouth to him before turning your attention to your siblings. "Yeah?"

"(First Name), I wanna cookie!"

"Just get one yourself, Mei," you say, ruffling your brother's hair as you watch your sister stare intensely at the pastries.

\* \* \*

><p>The time had passed until it was weeks, then months, since Kageyama had abdicated the throne.<p>

"Hey."

"Yeah?" You look up from your peaceful herd grazing the meadow, sun beating down on your face as you sit near the edge of the trees with the former king. "What?"

"When will I get my throne back?"

"Oh. Your throne," you murmur, "about thatâ€|"

"Will I get it back?"

"Yeah. Yeah, of course. I promised you I'd get it back for you, didn't I?"

"Then, when?"

"I haven't gotten any information from the chief about the current

state of affairs in the capital."

"So?"

You cross your legs and let out a small huff. "We can't just storm in there! Who knows if the people even like you? Tyrant. They'll revolt if you act too quickly to take back the throne."

"You'll be with me, though, right?"

Glancing over at the tall male, his face covered in light-dappled shadows from the trees, you crack a smile. "Of course, My Royal Highness. I'll be with you every step of the way, even if you fall. I was with you from the start, wasn't I?"

His face contorts into a strange expression. "Yeah."

"Is that your attempt at a smile? You would think that after more than half a year without any politics, you'd learn to smile and not grimace."

Leaning back on the grass, you stare up at the crystal blue sky, filled with white puffs and small black birds flying overhead. The gentle bleats of the sheep fill your ears as you lightly grip your shepherd's crook, wolf companion on one side and Kageyama on the other.

\* \* \*

><p>You're setting up for dinner with Kageyama when a loud knocking interrupts your train of thought. "Dammit, I almost dropped the platesâ€¢ Kageyama, can you get that?"</p>

The male silently pads towards the door; you can hear the gentle creak of the frame as the door is slowly pulled open. Silence greets your ears.

You put down your plate and make your way towards the front door. "Kageyama, just greet theâ€¢Sugawara?" Your eyes widen at the sight of the silver-haired butler, looking haggard and slightly worse for wear. "Don't just stand there, Kageyama, let him in! Oh, are you alright? What happened? How'd you find us?" Fretting over the former butler, you pull him into the house and shut the door tightly behind him.

"Sugawara?" All the onyx-haired male can do is stare in disbelief at his former subordinate; he blinks slowly and reaches out to touch his butler's sleeve. "It's you?"

"King Kageyama, are you alright?" The gaunt male looks ashen, yet his first move is to walk towards his former employer. "You haven't been harmed by anyone, have you?"

"Of course not! He's with me â€¢ nobody would dare lay a finger on him!" You puff out your chest in pride. "But Sugawara, what are you doing here?" Dragging him over to the dining table, you pull out a chair and gesture for him to sit.

"Have you not heard anything from the capital, my lady?" His concerned brown eyes search yours as you shake your head. "Really,

nothing?"

"Nothing. What's going on?"

"The people are rallying for my lord here," Sugawara gestures with his hand towards the king, "for him to retake the throne."

"What? Why?" You turn to glance at the king, then turn back to stare at his butler. "He was the reason why Karasuno was invaded, and now they want him back?"

"They prefer his rule to that of Nekoma's."

"But isn't Nekoma still in the capital?" Out of the corner of your eye, you see the king softly shuffle towards the hallway.

"My lordâ€"" The ashen-haired man begins to stand up, but is stopped by you.

"Let him go. I'll tell him later. I think he's in shock," you say as you take a seat in front of the butler. "Did Nekoma leave the capital?"

"They left due to the people's protests. Most want my lord back on the throne, since he's the rightful heir." Sugawara slowly leans back in the chair, closing his eyes as he runs a hand through his limp strands. "He hasn't ruled for long before he abdicated, you see, so it's hard to say if everyone really likes him. Perhaps he's the best option for this time."

"And the others? Are they opposed to him?"

"They don't particularly seem to care," he replies. "But he needs to come back immediately, Miss (First Name). I'm not sure you entirely understand how dire the situation is right now."

"When was this? Is there nobody leading the country?"

"Nekoma left about two months ago, and I've been in charge ever since," he sighs. "Who'd have thought, a butler in charge of a country?" The man in front of you lets out a soft, mocking laugh. "I sent you many letters in hopes that you would respond and bring my lord back to the capital, back to the castle, to reclaim the throne, but you never replied. I took it upon myself to travel out here in person to deliver the message to you, lest you two never return."

"I never received any messages â€" I wonder what happened to them," you muse as you push some cookies on a plate towards the butler. "You must be hungry. You can have the spare guest room; please stay the night. It's too late to reach the capital safely," you say with a glance out the window at the quickly darkening sky.

"My parents will be home soon, as will my siblings," you explain with a laugh to the butler. He replies in kind with a gentle smile. "You can explain the situation to them, but I doubt they'd be opposed to us returning to the capital."

\* \* \*

><p>After discussing it with your parents, it was decided that the

three of you â€“ Sugawara, Kageyama, and you â€“ would leave for the capital the next day at dawn. You would take your wolf companion with you, and the king's return would be kept secret until the next week, when he will announce his reclaiming of the throne.<p>

"Kageyama!" Knocking on his door, you turn the knob and push it open slowly. "I'm coming in."

His back is turned to you as he stares out the window at the stars in the night sky. You sit next to him on the bed, leaning your head on his shoulder. He stiffens slightly, then relaxes.

"The stars are really pretty, huh?"

He shrugs.

"We'll be able to see them from the castle, though, My Royal Highness." You proceed to explain to him everything that his butler had told you. Kageyama continues gazing out at the inky black expanse of sky, not replying to anything you say.

"Alright."

"Isn't this what you wanted, My Royal Highness?" You look at him and poke his arm. "You asked me before when we were returning to the capital to reclaim your throne. Now's your chance."

\_ I asked because I wanted to know how much time I had left with you.  
\_ He watches you, your face turned to the sky. The moonlight streams in through the window, highlighting your side profile and your features; your lashes leave soft shadows under your eyes as you glance down at your hands in your lap. "No, I'm fine with it."

He stands abruptly and you look up at him. "Well, I'm going to go pack," you say, edging towards the door. "You should, too. We're leaving at dawn tomorrow. See you at dinner, Kageyama."

\* \* \*

><p>The three of you set off on horseback for the castle. When you arrive after three days, having gone through several horrible experiences in roadside hotels to spend the night and multiple pranks played on you by local children, the first thing you do is collapse in the soft bed of your room.<p>

You had been promoted to a suite next to the king's personal bedroom. Running your hand over the elaborately carved cherry wood bed frame, you flop over and bury your face into your pillow. "What am I going to do? I said I would help him get back the throne, but now that he's actually hereâ€| on his throneâ€| what do I do?"

A knock comes at your door. Turning over quickly and sitting up straight, you call out, "Who is it?"

"Sugawara," comes the gently reply.

"Come in!"

"My lady?" You see his floppy silver mop of hair peek around the door. "I'm coming in." Shutting the door closed behind him, he walks

over to you. "Miss (First Name), I need to ask you a question. It's not exactly the best question, but it's necessary."

"What is it?"

"He needs a partner, my lady," the butler says, shuffling his feet on the floor. "A queen, you might say."

"Why?"

"It endears him to the people."

"Having a wifeâ€¦ that makes him more relatable, you're saying? That's important, how?"

"The people don't have much of an opinion on him. He didn't rule for much longer than a month before he abdicated, you see."

"But he was the reason why Nekoma invaded. Is there a reason why they don't dislike him?"

Sugawara looks around warily, then leans in closer to you. "They don't know he was the one who commanded the invasion of Nekoma. Another one of his generals took the fall for him."

"Why?"

He shrugs. "Apparently the general had promised my lord's parents to protect my lord at any and all costs."

You shake your head. "Ugh. Politics. Anyways, you were talking about a wifeâ€¦ what does that have to do with me?"

"My lord doesn't date. He doesn't like the daughters of the aristocrats â€" he thinks they're too stuck up."

You scoff lightly. "He should get a load of himself when we first met."

"What do we do?"

"Of course I have to advise him on thisâ€¦ we could marry him off to some girl from the countryside. Karasuno has a lot of pastures, right? That'd make him more relatable."

"Yes, but who? Who does my lord know, tolerate, and would make a good wife for him?" Sugawara thinks about it, head resting in hands. You lie back down on your bed and let out a sigh.

"That'd be hard, finding someone to marry him off to. Who would want to do it? I doubt any girls know he's back. Word travels slowly in the country."

"Unlessâ€¦" Sugawara turns to look at you.

"Unless? You mimic, cocking your head in surprise at the butler as you sit up on the bed again, hugging your pillow to your chest.  
"Unless what?"

"Unless you marry him, my lady."

## 10. Chapter 10

\*\*Chapter Ten: Uncertainty and Teddy Bears\*\*

\_Unless you marry him, my lady.\_

You practically keel backwards at Sugawara's words, staring at his face in shock. "Me? Marry the king?" Your mouth hangs open at his suggestion as you sit up straighter. "I'm sorry, Sugawara, but have you gone crazy? You're joking, aren't you?"

The butler leans forwards and shakes his head. "Miss (First Name), do I look like I'm joking?"

You stare into his deep brown eyes, watching the candlelight reflection flicker in his pupils. Inhaling deeply, you raise your head to look up at the ceiling. A soft sigh escapes your lips as you blink thrice, then glance down at the floor. "No," you manage to say, wringing your hands and biting your lip.

He reaches out and rests his hand on your knee, his earnest, melted-chocolate eyes boring into your own. "My lady, please consider it. The future stability of this country rests in your hands."

You continue to stare down at your lap, hands clasped together tightly. The butler stands and softly pads over to the door, closing it behind him as he leaves.

"What am I going to do?" Mumbling, you fall back onto the bed and cover your face with your pillow. "I thought I was just an advisor! I don't want to make these kinds of choices!"

\* \* \*

><p>You wake up the next day, groggy and irritated at the loud voice (and accompanying knocks) coming from your door. "Wait a second, I'm getting dressed!"</p>

Dressed in only your nightgown, you fling open the door to see the one and only king standing in front of your door. You rub the back of your head, frowning. "My lord, you do realize that I was sleeping, right?"

"I was well aware," he sniffs. "Get dressed. We're going to breakfast."

"You'd better go first," you yawn, stretching your arms above your head and arching your back like a cat. "I'm going to take a while."

"Can't you just get dressed now?" He shoves his way past you into your suite, assuming a position in front of your dresser.

"Well, \_somebody \_woke me up â€“ rather \_rudely, \_too, I might add." You shrug, rubbing the sleep from your eyes before pushing the king to the side and squatting in front of your drawers, provided by Sugawara. Grabbing a few articles of clothing from the chest, you clutch them to your chest as you stare at Kageyama. "Well?"

"Well, what?" He stares at you.

"Well, my royal highness, will you leave?"

"Why? Don't tell me what to do."

"Consider it some advice, unless you'd like to see me strip and dress in front of you."

He flushes slightly before mumbling something about indecent peasants, turning around as he does so.

"Thank you," you murmur as you move to the corner, the only view Kageyama would have of you being your back. You pull the clothes on rather quickly and face the king again, fully dressed. "I've got to get to the bathroom, too," you say, tapping on his shoulder.

The male glances at you, evaluating your outfit before giving a grunt of approval. He crosses his arms, continuing to scan you up and down.

You clear your throat and gesture towards the side with your eyes and chin. "Will you move?"

"Oh."

"Thanks. Just wait out here, will you?" Walking past him into your personal bathroom, you shoot him a smile before closing the door behind you.

\* \* \*

><p>"Alright!" You pull open the bathroom door to see the king, fast asleep on your bed. "My lord?" As you tiptoe over to the sleeping male, a soft sigh falls from your lips. "He'sâ€‘ sleeping."<p>

Staring down at him, you watch his chest rise and fall slowly. His side profile leaves nothing to be desired, with a nicely chiseled chin and long lashes casting delicate shadows on his pale cheeks. Messy onyx locks splay across his forehead and his mouth is set in a pleasant expression, nothing like the practically permanent scowl he always displays.

You lean over Kageyama, gently pushing his bangs out of his face. "If only you looked this peaceful normally," you whisper, a small smile dancing on your lips. Your hand moves to cup his cheek as you quickly peck the tip of his nose; you move to sit next to him, pulling his head into your lap and stroking his hair slowly.

\* \* \*

><p>The king wakes to see you, slumped against a pillow, fast asleep. He rubs his eyes and, realizing the position he's in on your lap, quickly sits up. "(Last Name)?" Kageyama stands. "Hey, (Last Name)."<p>

Your eyelids flutter at his voice but you mumble some unintelligible thing and turn over, your back now facing the king.

His eye twitches. "The gall of this girl, turning her back on me!" He pokes your cheek. "(First Name), wake up."

You groggily lift your hand in response and flip over again to face the king. "What do you want here to wake me up again?"

"Breakfast. And I need some advice from you. As an advisor," he grumbles as he turns and walks over to stand in front of the door. "Hurry up, girl."

\* \* \*

><p>At breakfast, the two of you sit at a long wooden table. All sorts of breakfast foods are laid out, from fresh fruits and juice to warm soup and bread. You inhale deeply, the wide assortment of smells assailing your senses; shivering in pleasure, you pull out a chair and begin eating.</p>

"It's really good! You should try some, My Royal Highness!"

He nods in response to your comment. "Yeah."

"Do I have to do everything for you? Here, give me that." You grab his plate and begin to load it up with all sorts of goodies from the table, not stopping until it has a small mountain of food resting atop it. "There you go! Eat up."

Kageyama takes the plate from you and begins to poke his food, spearing a sausage and bringing it to his mouth. Satisfied with his consumption of food, you resume your eager eating.

The grand hall is filled with sound of chewing and your happy, barely intelligible, mumbles. The king makes some inaudible comment about uncivilized peasants and you grab a piece of fruit from his plate.

"There's so much fruit there!" he protests, gesturing at the pile on the table.

"Food always tastes better when it's stolen from someone else's plate," you say, waving your fork at the king. Chewing and swallowing, you continue. "What was it you wanted me to advise you on?"

"Did Sugawara talk to you yet?"

You place your silverware on the table next to your plate and turn to look at Kageyama. "Talk to me about what?"

"About, you know the country. The kingdom." He blinks.  
"Me."

"About helping you find a wife, you mean?"

He shakes his head, bangs flying across his face. "No. About you!" he pauses, clearing his throat and taking a deep breath before staring at you. His eyes bore into yours, royal blue orbs flashing wildly against effervescent (eye color) pools. "About you becoming my

wife."

You stiffen, having forgotten about the previous evening's conversation with the sweet butler. Cutting off eye contact, you stare down at your lap as you clench and unclench your fists.

"Well."

"Well?"

A wan, pallid smile works its way across your face as you glance back at the king. "Well, is that it?"

He blinks, eyebrows furrowing. "What do you mean?"

"You know, is that it? Is that your entire marriage proposal?" Despite smiling, your hands are sweating and your knuckles are turning white as you clutch the bottom of your shirt. An arm crosses your torso to grip your other arm tightly, near the wrist.

A grimace makes its way onto his lips as you turn to watch him.

"Yeah."

"Is that your best attempt at a smile?" You give a small huff of a laugh and watch the king, your eyes wavering in the soft light streaming in through the window. Biting your lip, you glance back down at your lap. He nods while you heave a sigh.

"So? Will you?"

"Will I marry you, you mean?" You mouth the word 'yes' before shaking your head, squeezing your eyes shut. "Iâ€œ I guess."

The king stands up abruptly, grabbing your hand from your lap and pulling you to your feet. "We don't have to get married right away." He ruffles your hair before turning on his heel and walking away.

You watch his back, tall and broad, retreat into the distance before collapsing back into your chair. Pressing a hand to your forehead, you let out a short laugh. "Is that his way of trying to comfort me?"

\* \* \*

><p>Sprawling across your bed, you hug a throw pillow to your chest and roll around your mattress. "I know it's for Karasuno's sake," you mumble, "but I wanted to marry for love."</p>

Sitting up, you drop your head into your hands, elbows resting on your knees. Your pillow lies discarded on the floor, drooping sadly. "Do I like His Royal Highness?" You rub your chin, pretending to stroke a long, invisible beard. "Yeah, I do. But do I love him?"

You fall back onto your bed again, sighing loudly. "I don't know the answer to that." Raising your arm up to the ceiling, you stare at the back of your hand as you open and close it, wiggling your fingers. "Do I love him? Actually, the question should be, does he love me?" Grabbing the edge of your blanket, you grip it tightly in your hand as you watch your knuckles turn white. You cross your arms over your chest. "I'm not entirely sure he does."

A loud thump outside your bedroom door makes you start and sit up straight on your bed. "Who's there?"

Sugawara pokes his head in. "The walls here are pretty thin, my lady," he smiles at you. "Be careful that the king doesn't overhear your musings, especially since he's right next door." The silver-haired male waves at you before closing the door again.

Your eyes widen as you realize the implications of what he said.  
\_Didæ! did Kageyama overhear me?\_

You stay in your room for the rest of the day, mulling over possible options of what to do as well as hiding from the king.

\* \* \*

><p>The next day, you wake up to yet another loud pounding on your door. Grumbling something about strangling that stupid boy of a king for waking you up so early, you pull open the door. A soft teddy bear plush is shoved roughly into your arms. You look up at the face of the person giving them to you, their features partially covered with a dark hood. Flashing Prussian blue eyes pierce yours before the person rips their eyes away and flees down the corridor.</p>

You stare at the retreating silhouette as a smile makes its way across your lips. "Thanks, Kageyama."

## 11. Chapter 11

\*\*Chapter Eleven: One Wrong Misstep\*\*

"Don't mess this up, Kageyama!"

He flinches at your words. "Do you expect me to mess up?"

"Well, considering that you can barely put on a jacket by yourself and that you have a weird way of proposing to people, yes." A wide grin spreads across your face as you reach out for his collar to straighten it. "Sheesh, you can't even fix your shirt. How are you going to address the people? It's your first time giving a speech to them, right? You have to make a good impression." Fussing with the buttons, you swear quietly under your breath. "You buttoned the wrong buttons. Your shirt is lopsided."

Fixing it, you pull his shirt to smooth out any wrinkles and you extend an arm to ruffle his hair. The king scowls and you laugh. "Don't worry, My Royal Highness. I'll be behind you the whole time, supporting you, so go knock 'em dead!"

He raises an eyebrow.

"Not literally." Clapping him on the shoulder, you push him through the curtains as you follow him out.

The sun's glare inhibits your vision before your eyes adjust to see Kageyama standing on the balcony, playing with his shirt buttons again. You slap his hands away from his top to keep him from fidgeting and force a smile on your face as you stare out over the

crowd.

The balcony is inlaid with a cloudy marble tile and the balusters in front of you are ornately carved into elegantly curving hourglass columns, supporting a thick and somewhat dusty balustrade. You shift slightly as you bite your lip, drawing the liquid metal taste into your mouth.

He fingers with the cufflinks of his shirt sleeves, having given up with his buttons, and crosses his arms. His body is tense and he licks his lips, eyes darting around the crowd surrounding him. Gripping his speech paper tightly, his knuckles mimic the snowy white of the banisters lining the edge of the balcony.

You clear your throat and hiss under your breath, "Go on, give your speech."

He shoots you a glare before coughing slightly, the noisy crowd falling silent almost immediately. "Dear citizens and people of Karasuno, I am greatly honored to be standing before you all as your king. We have just recently recovered from a great battle fought with our neighboring country, Nekoma, and I am here to tell you that I will do whatever it takes to bring our land back to its former glory. This I swear."

A loud cheer erupts from the crowd and you glance down. There's a mass of people gathered under and around the balcony, eagerly staring up at the king to hear what he has to say. The sea stretches out for as far as the eye can see, with people leaning out of nearby building windows or standing on tables to see Kageyama better.

The king pauses and lets the people clap before continuing.

Your gaze locks in with that of a small girl, who waves at you. A smile tugs at your lips and you turn to watch the king's side profile. His lips curve slightly before they close into a tight-lipped smile; you watch him breathe in and exhale out. A lock of hair falls in his face but he brushes it aside quickly, barreling through his royal address. His words go in one ear and out the other as you stare out over the crowd, hearing but not comprehending his speech.

Kageyama turns to gesture at you. "This is my trusted advisor and fiancée, (First Name/Last Name); she hails from the Miyagi village." You start at the sudden introduction and bow quickly, smiling at the crowd before glancing back at the king, who continues. "We, the humble vassals of the people, promise to carry out your wills and make Karasuno great once more. Please lend me your support in rebuilding this country." He bows and you blink twice before regaining your wits and following his example to bow.

The overwhelming roar of applause almost deafens you but you manage to smile out at the crowd without wincing. Kageyama passes by you on his way out and takes your hand, almost dragging you off the balcony.

"Good job out there, my lord," Suga greets. "Same to you, too, my lady."

"It's not like I did anythingâ€œ I just kind of stood there and

grimaced at the crowd the whole time. I felt kind of like Kageyama here." You gesture at the king with a jerk of your chin.

The raven scowls but says nothing, crossing his arms over his chest.

"Even so, just you being there is huge for the king. It's a symbol for the people, that the ruling class is no longer purely aristocratic anymore, that the king has a commoner advising him and that he is willing to listen to the voices of the people," the butler smiles at you. "No offense intended, of course, my lady," he says quickly, waving his hands in front of him.

"It's the truth, isn't it? I am a commoner, after all. Well, at least that's over," you murmur while heaving a sigh. "What's next?" Your eyes watch the king's fidgeting movements and you slap his hand to keep him from playing with the hem of his shirt. "Don't ruin the shirt, My Royal Highness."

"There's a gala being held tonight, Miss (First Name)," the silver-haired man says. "It's important that you attend, after all we've introduced you to the people as my lord's advisor and fiancée, but we have yet to introduce you as such to other countries as well."

"Annoying Oikawa and his advisor, Iwaizumi, will be there as well," the king mutters.

"Oikawa and Iwaizumi! where have I heard those names before?"

"They're the king and advisor of our neighboring country, Aoba Jousai," the butler chirps. "Please be on your best behavior tonight, my lady. It's very important that we have good diplomatic relations with them as they're our vital trade relations."

"Alright," you sigh, running a hand through your (hair color) locks. "How long do I have until the ball?"

"It starts at 9 tonight; it's 4 pm right now. I suggest you get ready within the next few hours you have to pick a dress and learn the names and faces of other diplomats before the gala starts," Suga shrugs as you grimace. "Please be diligent about it, my lady. Same goes for you, my lord," he says, glancing over at the king. "We wouldn't want to upset His Royal Highness Oikawa, would we?"

"What makes you think I'll upset him?"

"Because you did so last time." The butler smiles, but the pleasant expression doesn't reach his eyes. Steely irises flash against murky Prussian blue pools and you can practically see sparks flying between the two men. "It will be a diplomatic mess if you don't conduct yourself properly, my lord," Suga bows. "Please go to your rooms and prepare adequately."

\* \* \*

><p>After hours of studying a list of the names and faces of the important people and diplomats attending the ball, you had paused for a brief dinner break. You didn't see Kageyama at the hall, so you ate

quickly and returned to your room.<p>

You pore over the fragile parchment, eyes narrowing as you try to make out the calligraphy handwriting detailing the names of the people. A knock comes at the door; without glancing up, you wave a hand and say, "Come in."

"Miss (First Name)? There's an hour till tonight's party — please pick a dress for tonight."

Turning to look at the source of the voice, you stare at the butler and the rack of dresses lined up behind him. "That's a lot of dresses," you murmur, standing up and drifting over to them. "How am I supposed to pick one?"

"They're all appropriate for tonight, my lady. Please choose one that you like."

Your eye wanders over the huge array, colors bombarding your vision. You reach out a hand and gently rub the material of a dress; it's silk, watery to the touch and light like a butterfly's wings. "What is Kageyama wearing? I mean, I'd hate to clash with him when we stand together," you say, clearing your throat and glancing back at the butler.

"He'll be wearing a black suit with hints of orange," Suga smiles. "If you would like to match, I recommend this dress."

He pulls out a dress from the back of the rack, hidden before behind the poofy tufts and flowing layers of other gowns. You stare at it in awe and immediately take it from the butler, running into the bathroom to change.

Despite struggling to figure out which way to put on the dress, you eventually succeed and manage to pull it on. You run a brush through your hair and push open the bathroom door to walk over to Suga. "How's it look?"

It's a simple black cutout dress. A bandeau-esque top covers your chest, amber-orange semicircles cutting inwards as the bottom of the top part slants downwards to show a slice of your midriff. A single black sash stretches from the top left side and cuts across your collarbones to wrap around your right shoulder. The skirt portion of the dress sits on your waist, one part layered over the other to achieve a flowy look. A train accompanies the dress.

The butler smiles at you. "It was made for you. C'mon, let's go see the king."

\* \* \*

><p>You push open the door to the king's apartments without even so much as a knock. "My Royal Highness!"<p>

A rustle comes from the closet and you look at the source of the noise. Soon enough, a head of ebony black pokes out and burning navy eyes stare at you. "What?"

"I wanted to see how well this dress matches your suit, like Suga said~ Are you ready?"

The king reluctantly steps out of the closet, tugging at his collar before looking at you.

"Well?"

"Well what?" he snaps, turning his head to glance off to the side. His lips form a pout and his eyes narrow as he blinks several times.

"Well, what do you think?"

He mumbles something unintelligible, a light pink dusting his cheeks.

"What was that?" You lean forwards toward the king, eyebrows furrowing as you cock your head and stare at him.

"I saidâ€¦ you don't look half-bad."

A snicker sounds from behind you. "That means he thinks you look good, my lady," the silver-haired male murmurs.

Your eyes widen before you laugh. "Thanks. You don't look too shabby yourself, either, My Royal Highness! Just fix your collar. Or, well, maybe I'll do it," you say as you reach out to straighten his unruly shirt collar. "Don't rumple it again, okay?"

\* \* \*

><p>The ballroom is filled with people and the airy scent of chardonnay lingers in the air. Delicate laughter and deep, throaty chuckles can be heard throughout the room and all you see surrounding you is a sea of muted dresses and suits.</p>

"C'mon, (Last Name)," the king tugs at your arm. "We have to greet people."

"Oh, look at who's become diligent! I guess you're listening to Suga now, huh?" You smirk at the taller male and he glares at you but says nothing.

"Ah, Tobio!"

A shadow falls across the king's face before he turns smartly to face the source of the voice. "Oikawa."

"Who's this beauty you have with you? What's your name?" The male in front of you raises your hand and presses a chaste kiss to it, tawny sephia eyes boring into yours.

You flinch at the sudden contact but do your best not to pull away. "(First Name/Last Name), my lord," you manage to say before curtsying to whom you recognize as the king of Aoba Jousai.

"Trashykawa!" A swift chop is delivered to the brunet's head. You glance up at the offender, who notices you and immediately retracts his hand. "I apologize for his behavior," the spiky-haired male says as he bows to you.

"That hurt, Iwaizumi!" Aoba Jousai's king protests as he fixes his hair. "You're embarrassing me!"

"You're the one embarrassing yourself, going around making moon eyes at all the women here," his advisor snaps.

Kageyama clears his throat and looks at you. "That's King Oikawa of Aoba Jousai and his advisor, Iwaizumi." His eyebrow twitches as he gestures to you slowly, eyes fixed on Oikawa's. "This is (First Name/Last Name), my advisor and fiancÃ©e."

"Aw, Tobio, you can call me 'older brother'~" the brunet sings as he slings an arm over the king's shoulder. "And that makes you my sister in law, then!" He sends a wink your way.

"In your dreams," both you and Kageyama deadpan at the same time.

"But remember how you used to follow me around and ask me to teach you stuff? Oh, you were so cute back then," Oikawa winks before continuing his assault on your fiancÃ©e.

You turn to Iwaizumi. "Is he always like this?"

"Yeah. Sorry about him." He rubs the back of his head apologetically. "He doesn't know when to lay off." The advisor's eyes watch the scene unfold and he frowns. "He doesn't know when to stop, either."

You return your gaze to the quarreling kings and heave a sigh, running a hand through your hair. Suddenly, Kageyama's eyes meet yours and they flash dangerously before he turns heel and marches off.

"I'll go talk to him and apologize for you, Shittykawa," Aoba Jousai's advisor sighs and scowls at Oikawa before hitting his king on the head and chasing after your fiancÃ©e.

The brunet watches his advisor chase after your king, a glint in his eyes. "Hey, (First Name) ~ I can call you that, right?" You nod as he gives you a delighted smile and continues. "Why'd you pick Kageyama to serve? You seem super smart, so why him?"

"Same reason why I imagine Iwaizumi puts up with you," you remark, looking the male up and down.

"Ah, so harsh! But seriously." He takes two champagne flutes from a waiter and hands one to you, his eyes narrowing as he watches you over the rim of his glass. "Why?"

You balance it in your fingers, sniffing the alcohol before placing it back on the tray of another waiter. "The country would fall apart without me."

"You hold yourself in high esteem, huh, (First Name)?"

"It's the truth," you murmur, avoiding his gaze.

"Such a pretty lady like yourself, you must've had guys swooning over you before," he smiles before taking a sip of the chardonnay.

You let out a short bark. "As if."

"But now you're going to marry the king of Karasuno!"

"I don't know if that's better or worse," you laugh, pulling over a waiter and asking for a water before returning your gaze to Oikawa. "He's a handful, alright."

Kageyama suddenly shows up next to you, followed shortly by Iwaizumi. Karasuno's king glares daggers at the brunet, who mockingly shivers and says, "Ah, it looks like you're unhappy, Tobio~ I wonder why?"

"(First Name) and I have more people to greet." He grabs your arm and begins to pull you away before Aoba Jousai's king takes hold of your hand.

Oikawa whispers something in your ear, his eyes sparkling with mischief. You flush, smears of pink spreading across your cheeks, before shaking your head and letting out a weak breath.

Your fiancÃ©'s glower intensifies before he successfully drags you away from the brunet.

\* \* \*

><p>The two of you wind up in a dark hallway, a ways off from the ballroom. A faint light streams in through the window, courtesy of the full moon outside.</p>

"Let go of me!" You shake his hand off and stare at your wrist, now red with pale finger imprints from his tight grip. "What's wrong with you?!"

He pushes you against a wall, arms and body fencing you in on all sides. His gaze is deadly, eyes a virulent midnight blue in the dim lighting. "What did he say to you?"

Your mouth sets into a frown. "What does it matter to you?"

"What did he say to you?"

"Nothing that concerns you," you say, turning your face away from the king and crossing your arms.

Kageyama strikes the wall, a scowl plastered on his face. The wall behind you trembles from the force of his blow. His arm is tensed and his teeth are bared, black fringe falling into his eyes. "Tell me, dammit!"

"Why do you want to know so much?" You practically yell the words at the king, outrage evident in your eyes.

His lips crash onto yours and you flinch, trying to push him off of you. The king's eyes are squeezed shut as he grips your shoulder with one hand and cradles your cheek with another; his knuckles turn a milky white, like that of the moon. His body is trembling as he leans against you, legs surrounding yours, and bites your lower lip. Your fingers grab the front of his shirt and make a shaky fist; your arms strain as you try to squirm away from the king, but it's to no

avail.

Kageyama finally relents and eases up off of you, black fringe falling into his eyes as he breathes heavily.

The sound of a slap resounds through the hallway as you stare up at the king, your body trembling. Your face is flushed as you clench your jaw, hands balling into fists next to your side.

Murky blue orbs swirl against burning (eye color) irises.

"What do you want from me, Kageyama?"

## 12. Chapter 12

\*\*Chapter Twelve: A Midnight Rendezvous\*\*

A knock echoes through your room. "My lady? It's Sugawara. May I come in?"

You cross your arms across your chest and continue to stare at the wall. Your lips are pulled into a frown and your shoulders are hunched, your hair wispy around your face and your countenance miffed.

The rapping sounds again before a mop of silver hair pokes its way into your room. "Lady (First Name)? Are you alright?"

You barely spare the butler a glance before you fall back onto your bed. "Hardly."

"I brought dinner," he says, pushing open the door and closing it with his foot. In his arms is a tray of food, filled with a few choice sandwiches, some fruit, salad, and a cake for dessert. He places it on the table in the center of the room and sits next to you on the soft bed. "You've been holed up here for the days. I think it's time that I asked you what's bothering you."

"I've been stuck in here for two days," you correct, wagging a finger at the butler. He smiles softly as you continue. "Thank you for bringing me my meals by the way, Sugawara. But the real issue at hand here is the king."

He chuckles. "Since when is it not?"

"He can hear you, you know," you murmur, slinging an arm over your eyes as you point towards the wall between your two apartments. "You told me that the walls here are thin, didn't you?"

"What happened with him?"

A shiver runs through your body and you grimace at the memory. "He kissed me at the ball."

"Wouldn't most girls like it if a king kissed them?"

"It wasn't out of love, I don't think. Probably more out of jealousy of the fact that king Oikawa can get a reaction out of me that he can't."

"True, but he does care for you, you know. Speaking of which, my lady, the king of Aoba Jousai and his advisor are still here."

You sit up and press a hand to your forehead, feeling your temples throb slightly at the mere mention of the brunet. "I know. For diplomatic reasons, yeah? He came all the way here, so he might as well stay a few days and discuss politics and foreign policy with us. When is he leaving?"

"Tonight. Are you sure you would not like to confer with Iwaizumi?"

You cast a sidelong glance at the butler. "Who?"

Sugawara hangs his head, a wan smile decorating his face. "King Oikawa's advisor. Did you really not know?"

"I knew that," you laugh, hitting the butler lightly on the shoulder. "I was just messing with you."

He shakes his head as he laughs. "Would you not like to meet with him?"

"I don't think I have to, right?"

"You shouldn't skimp out on your duties as the royal advisor and queen-to-be, my lady."

"What if I did? What if I just up and left?"

"Please don't," he murmurs before standing up. "Regardless, Iwaizumi has requested an audience with you. After you finish dinner, please meet him in the royal audience chamber." He walks over to the door and waves at you before shutting it behind him.

"Got it," you sigh before hugging a pillow to your chest and waddling over to the table to eat your dinner.

\* \* \*

><p>Having finished your meal, you sit back on the edge of your bed. <em>What if I actually "left," though? How would Kageyama react? <em>A sinister smile spreads across your face as you drift over to your dressers, pulling out articles of clothing.

You open and close the drawers loudly before padding over to the closet and forcefully tugging the clothes off of the hangers. Slamming the closet door closed, you grab your small bag and begin to fold your belongings before you shove them into the container.

"Oh! Bathroom stuff! I need that." Running off to the adjoined bathroom, you return with an armful of hygiene products. You shove those into your bag as well.

A knock sounds at your door. "Lady (First Name)?"

"Sugawara? Weren't you just here?"

"The king sent me this time. Please open up."

You shut your bag quickly and place it next to the door before making your way towards the butler, standing on the other side of the entryway; you press your body weight against the wood as you continue to talk. "Sorry, can't. What does he want?"

"He asks if you intend on leaving the premises any time soon, my lady."

"Is that verbatim?"

The butler is silent for a while before he replies. "Not exactly. What he said is not suitable to be repeated, actually, but that is the gist of what he told me to tell you. Do you plan on leaving soon?"

"Not yet."

"Please open the door."

You reluctantly pull it open and before you stands the butler and the king, the latter fuming and the former smiling sheepishly at you.

"You!"

"(First Name), where are you planning on going?" The king's words are laced with a poisonous bite, his eyes freezing you to the spot.

You avoid his gaze and instead stare at the butler. "I'm going to the royal audience chamber now to fulfill my duties as a royal advisor and queen-to-be. Iwaizumi has requested to meet with me." Pushing past the silver-haired male, you proceed to speed-walk away. You can feel Kageyama's gaze on your back the entire way down the hallway.

\* \* \*

><p>You tug at your skirt before pushing open the lavishly decorated doors to the royal audience chamber. "Iwaizumi?" Your shoes squeak on the marble tiles and you wince at how loud your voice sounds in the large, empty room. "Are you here?"<p>

"Ah, (First Name)~ So glad to see you!"

A chill runs through your body as you turn towards the male sitting in a chair, smack dab in the middle of the room. "You're not Iwaizumi."

"And you're not very nice!" The brunet pouts at you before he takes a sip from his wine glass.

"Where is your advisor?"

"Do you like him more than me? You haven't said more than a couple of words to him, so surely you can't prefer him over me!"

You sigh, walking over to stand in front of Aoba Jousai's king. "King Oikawa, is there something you wish to discuss with me?"

His eyes narrow over the rim of his glass and a shadow falls on his face. You shiver at his expression. "Why, yes, actually. Have you given what I said at the ball any thought?"

"What you said?" Your mind returns to the grand gala and to the moment when he had whispered in your ear, before Kageyama roughly pulled you away and kissed you in the hallway. "No, not really," you flush, rubbing your arm. "What exactly did you say again?"

"I asked you if you would like to marry me instead of him, (First Name)." He shakes his glass from side to side, watching you all the while.

"I have a favor to ask of you, my lord."

"Oh?" He licks his lips. "Will you marry me after I grant you this favor?"

You cock your head and hold a finger up to your mouth. "Not so fast." Walking briskly, you stand next to the brunet and whisper in his ear, "Will you pretend to kidnap me?"

His eyes widen slightly before he narrows them again, glancing at you out of the corner of his eye. "What do I get out of this?"

"Pleasure at seeing King Kageyama squirm, sir," you say, drawing away from the king and curtsying slightly. "You know how entertaining that is, since you fluster him so often. However, he'll be in a tizzy because of \_me \_this time, and you can only imagine how he'll act when his fiancÃ©e's the one in 'trouble.'"

Oikawa gives a slight chuckle. "I'm leaving tonight, did you know that?"

"Then pretend to kidnap me tonight."

\* \* \*

><p>The clock strikes midnight, its hands inching across the face. "My lord! Lady (First Name) is missing!" Sugawara flies into the king's room, hair awry and eyes frantic. He grips the edge of the door tightly, knuckles turning white as his fingers splay across the wood.</p>

"What?" Kageyama's eyes flash at the butler as he sits upright, comprehending the information. "Sugawaraâ€| secure the perimeters. Let nobody in or out until their identities are verifiedâ€| and keep that king and his advisor locked in their rooms until I say otherwise."

"King Oikawa and Iwaizumi are missing, too, Your Royal Highness," the butler says, inhaling and exhaling slowly.

The onyx-haired male visibly tenses, gripping the parchment in his hand so tightly it seems that it might rip. "What did you say?" His voice, deep and slow, echoes throughout the room.

"I said, King Oikawa and Iwaizumi are missing, too. Do you thinkâ€|?"

The king stands up quickly, pushing past Sugawara in his effort to get out of his room and into yours.

He stands in your suite, scrutinizing every corner; the butler sighs behind him, a ways off. Your suitcase is still leaning against the door frame, a detail not gone unnoticed to the king.

"Go close the castle gates. Both of them. Now."

"Yes, my lord!"

\* \* \*

><p>Your head lolls on your shoulder as you slowly open your eyes, blinking twice as you come to. "Where am I?"</p>

"With me, (First Name)~"

A scowl etches itself on your face. "With you? Did you really have to drug me?" You wrinkle your nose in disgust and try to rub your eyes, only to find that your arms are tied together with a silk rope.

"Don't be so mean~ I went through all the trouble to get you here, you know? Would you rather I knock you out?" The brunet smiles at you from across the carriage, a glimmer in his eye.

You struggle with the knot, trying to pull your hands out of it before you sigh, "I told you to pretend to kidnap me, my lord."

"A pretend kidnapping wouldn't get the same reaction out of your fiancÃ©, (First Name). Look. They're securing the gates."

"It's kind of hard to see when you've tied me up, sir," you say as you strain your neck to stare out the window. "Where's your advisor?"

"I drugged him. He's asleep right next to you."

You start, suddenly aware of the male slouched beside you. Exhaling softly, you glare at the king as you struggle against your bonds. "I thought this was a pretend kidnapping!"

"You said something along those lines already," he murmurs, examining his nails nonchalantly.

"Screw whatever I said before! You promised me it would be pretend!"

"I never promised you anything, though it did start out as a pretend kidnapping," he winks. "Won't you cooperate with me, (First Name)?"

\* \* \*

><p>"Where are they?!"</p>

"My lord, please, calm down!"

"My fiancÃ©e is gone. Where is she?!" The king roars, eyes bulging as he shakes his butler back and forth. "Never mind sending the guards after them, I'll go myself!" He storms off towards the stables, pulling himself up on his horse. A soft growl comes from near the

ground and he glances down to see Shadow, your wolf, making his way out of the stalls.

The king follows the wolf out, passing the butler as his horse accelerates to gallop at full speed until he's side by side with the wolf.

"Where was that wolf this entire time?" The butler muses as he watches the king depart. "(First Name) and Kageyama, they're really a pair, huh? But never mind that â€" guards!"

\* \* \*

><p>Kageyama leans over his horse, urging it on faster as his heart pounds wildly, desperately, frantically in his chest. Soon enough, an aquamarine carriage inlaid with white alabaster comes into view, stopped on the side of the road. The crest of the royal family of Aoba Jousai is present on the back, shining under the full moon. Your wolf companion is already there, circling the rear wheels cautiously.</p>

"Dammit, King Oikawa, you didn't have to tie the knots that tightly!"

Your fiancÃ© perks up at the sound of your voice. \_(First Name)'s okay. \_He slows the horse down to a trot as he nears the vehicle.

Your silhouette practically kicks a taller, larger figure out of the carriage and onto the ground. Kageyama watches as you grab the king by the collar, slapping him multiple times.

Your (hair color) locks practically glow under the moonlight and he can even make out your eyes from afar, your (eye color) orbs narrowed and staring daggers at the male in front of you.

He dismounts from his horse and walks towards you. "(First Name)â€|"

You pause in your assault, dropping your victim to the dirt before turning to look at Kageyama. "My lord?" A quick glance at Oikawa reveals that he's trying to escape, so you push him back onto the ground, dropping one of your knees onto his chest to keep him down. Your wolf growls at the brunet, who shudders. "Please excuse my diplomatic misconduct, King Oikawa, but it's all in the name of self-defense and justice."

"Are youâ€| alright?" Your fiancÃ©'s chest rises and falls quickly, his cheeks sparsely colored. His shirt collar is crooked and his sleeves are wrinkled, no doubt from his arms being pressed tightly against his steed during his frantic ride to reach you. His lips, slightly parted, are dry and his eyes are frantic.

"Yes, perfectly fine," you say, brushing your skirt.

"Where's Iwaizumi?" Kageyama asks, staring at you and the other man pressed against the earth.

"Again with Iwaizumi!" Oikawa practically throws his hands up in the air, exasperated. "Why do people like him more than me?"

"It's because he's a better person than you. He has morals, my lord," you hiss. "Whereas you here drugged your own advisor to kidnap me."

"King Kageyama! Lady (First Name)! Are you two alright?" Sugawara dismounts from his horse as well, huffing a bit. "What happened?"

"King Oikawa drugged Iwaizumi so he could kidnap me to bring me back to Aoba Jousai and make me his bride," you deadpan.

"Is that true?" Kageyama and Sugawara both turn to look at the other male lying on the ground.

"Haha! Funny story about that, actually," the brunet chuckles. "I'll explain everything, so won't you hear me ouâ€"

"Please get off of him, my lady," the butler says, smiling. His friendly expression doesn't reach his eyes and you shiver, slightly frightened at this new side of Sugawara.

You stand up quickly and hold out a silk rope, wrinkled and torn in places. "Here. He used this to tie me up, so you can tie him up with it, too. It's pretty long, actually."

The butler nods quickly before pushing the king off the ground and forcing his arms behind his back. "Sorry, my lord, but I must ask you to return to the castle. You're under temporary arrest, King Oikawa."

"How did you get out of the rope?" the brunet murmurs, staring at your wrists. A red rope burn is evident there, probably from the chafing of the makeshift manacles against your skin as you struggled to get out of them.

You smile cheekily at Oikawa. "Make sure you don't leave any sharp objects lying around in your carriage when you try to kidnap someone, okay, my lord?" You toss a sharp, chopstick-like silver pin at his shoes. "I would hate for a court lady to lose her favorite hair pin again."

\* \* \*

><p>Back at the castle, you make a beeline for your suite, your wolf companion padding down the hall to its own personal room next to yours. Kageyama follows you to your room, shutting the door behind him as he enters.</p>

A thick silence falls over the two of you, him staring at you and you collapsing on your bed as you hug your teddy close to your chest.

"What?" you mumble. "Out with it, My Royal Highness. What do you want?"

"Are you crazy?" His voice is soft, his eyes dangerous as he watches you.

You sit up. "What are you talking about?"

"He's the king of Aoba Jousai. He's trained in the martial arts; what made you think you could take him on? You're a girl â€“ be more aware of who you are!"

Your muscles tense and you stiffen, standing up to glare the king in the eye. "Don't you dare baby me! I'm a grown woman and I can take care of myself. I took him down and I'm okay. Shadow was there, too, so don't look down on me just because I'm female!"

"You don't get it! What if Shadow wasn't there? What if I hadn't showed up when I did? You could be dead right now!"

"I doubt Oikawa would have killed me," you scoff.

He grabs you by the shoulders, pushing you down onto the bed. "And if he did? Where would we be then? Where would I be?"

"Stop treating me like I'm someone to be protected! Dammit, I can handle myself!"

The king collapses onto your chest, gripping your shirt in his hands. "And if you couldn't?"

"If I couldn't what?"

"If you couldn't protect yourself, then what?!"

You shove him off of your chest and grab your teddy bear, hugging it to your chest as you glower at the king. "King Kageyama, please leave."

"If you couldn't protect yourself, then what? Answer my question."

"I said, get out."

"Answer my question."

He takes a step back as you stand and force him back towards the door. "Get out of my room."

"And then what, huh?" His Prussian-blue eyes blaze as his eyebrows furrow, lips pulling into a discontent line. "And then what?"

"You know what?" You thrust the teddy bear into the king's arms, the expression in his eyes flickering from anger to confusion to betrayal. His arms wrap around the soft plush, hugging it to his chest as he searches your face for answers. He gets none as you continue speaking. "I don't want this anymore. You want to know why? I'll tell you what you told me, okay?"

He shivers at your tone, the atmosphere surrounding the two of you becoming frigid and heavy. The clock chimes one am, the only sound filling the silence besides your labored breathing. His black bangs fall into his murky orbs swirling with despondent emotions as a sliver of moonlight shines in through the window, illuminating your side profile. The male studies your face, from your arched brows to the bridge of your nose to the subtle curvatures of your lips and chin, down to your neck and to your collarbones. He watches you

clench your teeth and set your jaw into a firm line, watches your shoulders tense and your hands ball into fists at your sides, watches you lower your head to stare at the ground and your hair fall into your face.

He watches a single tear streak down your cheek.

"You know, Tobioâ€| I can't trust you anymore."

### 13. Chapter 13

\*\*Chapter Thirteen: Cat Got Your Tongue, Kageyama?\*\*

"Sugawara, I have a request for you."

The butler perks up at your words, blinking twice. "What is it, my lady?"

You poke at your spongy cake, scooping up a bit of cream with your fork and licking it. The sweet, milky taste fills your mouth and you rest your chin in the palm of your hand. "I would like a room change."

Sugawara glances around the dining hall warily; having not seen any sign of the king anywhere within the vicinity, he replies, "Whatever for?"

"Reasons."

"Does this have anything to do with what happened last night after that Aoba Jousai scandal?"

You drop your fork, the silverware clattering loudly in the silent room as you stare at him. Hugging your knees to your chest, you stare down at your plate and give a short bark of a laugh, eyes downcast. "â€|of course it does."

"It has to do with the king, doesn't it?"

"Like you said before, since when does it not?"

He cocks his head to the side, silver mop of hair flopping into his eyes briefly. "Are you avoiding the king now, Lady (First Name)?"

You stiffen and pull your legs closer to you. "Maybe."

"Care to tell me what happened?"

"He insulted me."

"That's surprising," the butler chuckles.

"Don't laugh at me! I'm serious! He basically called me weak, you know? Because I'm a girl! I'm not a china doll or whatever â€" I can protect myself. And I have Shadow, too, even though I have no idea where he is right now."

"Very reassuring, my lady. Do you have any rooms in mind that you

would like to move to?"

You glance up at the butler, meeting his warm yet steely gaze. His face betrays no emotions save for the concerned smile tugging at his lips. "Umâ€œ is my old room still open?"

"The one you stayed in when you first came here? Of course it is. I'll tell someone to prepare it for you immediately." He stands quickly and bows to you before striding out of the room to flag down a maid.

"That suitcase I packed before comes in handy, then," you mumble, leaning back in your chair.

\* \* \*

><p>"My lady?"</p>

"Yes? Come in, Sugawara," you murmur, having just finished unpacking your suitcase in your old-yet-new room. It's situated down the hall and to the right of the king's, about 150 meters away from your old room. A single rose, dried and withered, sits in the crystal vase on your bedtable.

He pushes open the door and stands in the door frame, chuckling as he watches you flop back on the bed. "I would suggest you prepare for a brief overnight trip tomorrow."

"Why? I just finished unpacking!"

"Have you forgotten? You're to go to Nekoma with His Royal Highness."

"Wait, is tomorrow the meeting to repair diplomatic relations between us and them? I thought that was next week! Dammit, fine, I'll start preparing."

"We leave at five tomorrow morning, my lady. I would advise you go to bed, as it's almost quarter to midnight now."

"Ah, I hate early morning commutes! Why do you do this to me?"

The butler laughs as he steps out of the room and pulls the door closed behind him.

\* \* \*

><p>"Must I sit in the same carriage as him?"</p>

"It would be highly impractical to use two, seeing as one carriage can seat four comfortably," Sugawara smiles at you. He bows politely and holds open the carriage doors for you.

You kick the gravel pavement, watching a pebble skitter off past the rear wheels of the vehicle before hiking up your skirt and climbing in. Refusing to glance at the king, who watches you enter, you take a seat diagonally opposite of him.

The three hour ride to Nekoma is stifling. You spend the entire time resting your chin in the palm of your hand, staring out the window at

the passing scenery. Your fiancÃ© coughs several times throughout the trip, probably to get your attention; you ignore him, cross your legs, smooth out your skirt, and continue gazing out the window. Rich countryside scenery passes by â€“ golden fields of grain waving in the wind, lush evergreens towering above soft grass, cerulean lakes mirroring an open sky and regal mountains.

After a while, the carriage slows and eventually comes to a stop. Staring out of the window, you gawk at the giant castle. It's tall and imposing, made entirely out of a black stone; a drawbridge stands at attention, spanning the width of a small moat. The building's walls are tall, perhaps 10 meters high, and pennants fly from the top, stamped with the red and black emblem of the Nekoma royal family.

"We've arrived!" The carriage door is pulled open and you clamber out of the vehicle, practically falling onto the ground in your panic to get out of that stuffy room.

"Please compose yourself, Lady (First Name)," Sugawara murmurs as he pulls you off the ground, three suitcases by his side. "You will be judged here, so take care to conduct yourself in a dignified manner." He pauses, then aims a pointed glare at Kageyama. "The same goes for you, too, Your Royal Highness."

"My lord, my lady, welcome to Nekoma."

A smooth voice greets your ears and you look up; the speaker is a somewhat short man with sharp brown eyes and tawny hair. He bows. "My name is Morisuke Yaku, the butler of Nekoma's royal family. I suppose my role is similar to that of Sugawara's here!" He laughs and rubs the back of his head, grinning at you.

"Nice to meet you, Mr. Yaku," you murmur as you curtsy, staring wide-eyed at the male.

A soft grunt is heard from behind you and you turn to see your butler elbow the king in the gut. "Greet him!" Sugawara hisses.

"H-Hello," Kageyama manages to force out, bowing stiffly at a perfect 90° angle so that his torso is parallel to the ground.

"I apologize for my fiancÃ© â€“ he's not exactly the best at first impressions," you chuckle, sighing as you move backwards to step on the onyx-haired male's foot, a sign for him to get his act together and to let you do all the talking.

"I will show you to your room," Yaku bows once again.

\* \* \*

><p>"Here it is!" Nekoma's butler strides into the large, luxurious room, with one king-sized bed sitting in the middle. "Please take your time in unpacking and refreshing yourselves. You will meet with King Kozume and his advisor, Kuroo, in about an hour. Sugawara, your room is just down the hall from here â€“ you can't miss it. Please call me if you need anything!" With a wave, he leaves the three of you to stand and mull about.</p>

The room is lavishly decorated, Nekoma having pulled out all the

stops for your royal diplomatic visit. The walls are a rich vermillion, perfectly complimenting the trio of white roses sitting on the glass table in the center. A black leather couch sits off to the side by the window, framing a breathtakingly gorgeous view of the Nekoma mountain range. The bed's frame is made out of black cherry wood; it has a canopy with an alabaster curtain, the crest of the Nekoma royal family decorating it in a muted currant color.

You stare at the bed. "Sugawara, why is there only one bed?"

"They must have thought that since you two are engaged, you would share one bed," the butler replies, handing you your suitcase and the king his. "Is that a problem? I can get Yaku if you would like to request a room change."

"No!"

Kageyama and Sugawara both look at you curiously, surprised at your sudden outburst.

You flush and continue in a softer voice. "I meant, no, it's not an issue. I'll just sleep on the couch." Heaving your suitcase over with you, you toss it on the sofa and wave at them standing near the door. "Go on, what are you waiting for? Your Royal Highness, take the bed. Yaku will come for us to meet with the king and his advisor, right? I'm going to take a nap."

The butler nods slowly before backtracking out of the room. "Yes. Once again, if you need anything, I'm right next dooâ€" "

"Got it, thanks!"

Falling back onto the sofa, you sling an arm over your eyes and shut out the brightness of the room as you hear the door close after the butler.

"(First Name)."

You hug a cushion to your chest.

"(First Name)!"

You cover your head with said cushion.

"(First Name), I order you to reply to me! I want to talk to you!"

You throw it at the king. "Shut up. You're annoying."

\* \* \*

><p>"Please come this way, sir, ma'am," Yaku says, pushing open the grand mahogany doors. Inside is a sparsely furnished room, the walls covered with a rich black oak paneling and yet more of the royal family's crest. He turns to look at Nekoma's king and his advisor, sitting in the center of the room. "When you finish talking, Your Highness, sir, please call for me!" The butler slips out, the doors shutting with a resounding <em>boom! <em>behind him.

You nudge your fiancÃ© in the side and begin to walk towards the two

males. One, a blonde, is perched on the edge of his throne, his golden cat-like eyes fixed on the ground. He glances up to see you approaching him and looks away again.

"Your Royal Highness, King Kozume, my name is (First Name/Last Name), the royal advisor and fianc  of King Kageyama. It is my pleasure to meet you." You sweep your skirt and curtsey deeply to him.

"Kenma is fine," he murmurs, eyes still fixated on the plush red carpet lining the floor.

"Sorry?"

"Kenma is fine."

"O-Oh. Then, if I may have the honor, King Kenma," you say, tucking a lock of hair behind your ear as you stick a hand out to him.

He takes it and shakes it quickly, his grip soft and fleeting and his fingers rough and callused.

You turn your attention to his advisor. The black-haired male leans back in his seat, leering at you; his eyes narrow as he smiles, the expression not reaching his feline eyes. His fingers form a small steeple in front of him as he crosses his legs.

"Mr. Kuroo? It is my pleasure to greet you today," you smile, trying your best not to flinch or back away from the male as you curtsey. You stick out your hand for him to shake.

"The pleasure is all mine," he purrs, taking your hand and planting a chaste kiss to the tips of your fingers.

You resist the urge to pull your digits away from him. "Lovely to meet you." Taking a step back, you push your fianc  towards them. "Greet them, Kageyama."

He greets them quickly, this time not bowing as stiffly; it seems that at least he knows how to conduct himself in the presence of royals, however rude he may be to you on a daily basis.

The two of you sit across from the Nekoma royalty and advisor and you begin talking, pulling out a notepad and a pen. "Let's get down to business, shall we?"

Kenma tears his eyes off the floor long enough to focus on you, eyes widening as he listens to you talk. His advisor leans forward and rests his elbows on his knees, tilting his head at an angle as he watches you with narrowed eyes and thin lips. Your fianc  glares stubbornly at the wall behind Kenma and Kuroo, one leg crossed over the other and jaw set in a firm line.

\* \* \*

><p>"Thank you for meeting with us today, King Kenma and Mr. Kuroo!" You curtsey to them, glaring at Kageyama to do the same. He follows suit, albeit slowly and reluctantly. "We shall see you at dinner, then. Thank you for your courtesy and hospitality!"</p>

You have one foot out the door when Kuroo's deep timbre stops you in

your tracks. "(First Name), we have a man called General Sawamura who insisted on meeting you today. We captured him as a prisoner of war and we would like to return him to you as an act of goodwill in light of the pleasant talk we just had."

"Is that so?" You turn smartly on your heel and regard Kuroo with a level gaze. "We would be delighted to meet with him."

"We? The two kings have much to discuss, no? I'm afraid it will just be you and the general. King Kageyama, if you wouldn't mind staying hereâ€¹?" Kuroo rises and walks over to you, standing next to you with one hand resting on your shoulder. Your fiancÃ© glares at him but does as he says, moving back to sit in front of Kenma.

"General Sawamura is this way, (First Name)." He grips both of your shoulders and steers you out of the room.

"Kageyama! Behave, alright?" You manage to call over your shoulder before Kuroo closes the door behind him.

\* \* \*

><p>The general is seated in front of a table in a modestly furnished room; he turns at the sound of the door opening.</p>

"Hello, General," you smile, pulling out a chair and sitting across from the male. "I don't believe we've properly met before. (First Name/Last Name), at your service!"

"Daichi Sawamura," he nods. "Former General of the Karasuno army, but you already know that."

"I'll leave you two here to discuss what you want," Kuroo says as he closes the door.

"He's probably eavesdropping, isn't he?" you deadpan.

"Probably," the male in front of you laughs. "I wouldn't put it past him to do so."

You lean back in your chair, arching your back as you stretch your arms up to the sky. Sighing contentedly, you stare at the general. "Kuroo strikes me as a sort of shadow king."

"How so?"

"King Kenma seems soâ€¹ timid. I guess that's an okay word to describe him. He doesn't seem to care too much about anything and he seems a bit shy. On the other hand, Kuroo seems like the real ruler here, don't you think?"

"Don't underestimate Kenma Kozume. He's a genius at battle strategies, you know! Why do you .think Karasuno's never won against Nekoma?"

"Dunno. If that's true, then we were pretty stupid to invade Nekoma if Kenma is such an astute strategist, yeah?"

The general sighs, running a hand through his black hair. "Yeah. Hey, Lady (First Name), I wanted to talk to you about the war. Well, about

the war and your fiancÃ©."

You raise an eyebrow. "What about it?"

"Remember how, after the people rebelled and Nekoma pulled out, Karasuno's citizens seemed fine with him assuming the throne?"

"Yeah. It was weird, especially since he was the one who instigated the war in a sense."

The general shakes his head and sighs. "They were okay with it becauseâ€"well, I don't know if Sugawara told you or not, but a general took the fall for Kageyama. Specifically, \*\*\_I\_\* took the fall for Kageyama."

"What? You're joking right?" You grasp the edge of your seat, fingers splayed across the swirling wood grains; your knuckles turn an off-white, sickly color and you grit your teeth. "Why would you do that?"

"I promised his parents that I'd watch out for him. That's kind of how I ended up here, too." He chuckles and smiles again at you, this time widely and wholeheartedly. "I owed his parents because they took me in and helped me when I was on the streets causing trouble, soâ€|"

"Kageyama really owes you now, then," you muse.

"He doesn't have to pay me back; I did it willingly. It's the least I could do, after all, saving their sonâ€| It's a pity they're not here anymore, but anyways, I wanted to talk about him with you." He stands to hover over you, gripping both of your shoulders as his eyes bore into yours. "Thank you."

You flush at the close contact and turn your head away, staring down at the floor. "What for?"

"Forâ€| helping Kageyama. I know it's hard since I've worked with him, especially with how tyrannical he can be on the front lines. Remember that? When you visited the army with him?"

"Yeah, I remember. But I didn't really help him much since then."

"You're his fiancÃ©. He wouldn't have proposed to just anybody, you know," he chuckles, hitting you lightly on the head.

A wan smile tugs at your lips. "He didn't really propose all that wonderfully, either, but that's a different story. I really don't think I did anything, though."

"No, you changed him! The old Kageyama wouldn't have come to establish better diplomatic relations with Nekoma. The old Kageyama wouldn't even consider it! He would have been selfish and wouldn't have cared about the country, but it's obvious that now he does care because he came here for\_ Karasuno's \_sake, yeah? He also wouldn't have agreed to marry anybody back then, either. He hated those aristocratic ladies in his court!" Sawamura stands up this time and looks down at you, patting your head. "So, thank you."

"I swear, I didn't do anything that warrants thanks. I just fight with him a lotâ€| you know? I fight with him a lot and honestly, I don't think he even listens to me. I don't even do all that much as an advisor."

"You're the one who wanted to have this diplomatic meeting. I heard about it from Mr. Kuroo before. He said that a spunky advisor of Kageyama's wanted to meet with him and King Kozume. Somehow you managed to convince Kageyama to come along, too."

"If he didn't come, it'd be useless. But I swear, I don't do anything! It wasn't me at all â€" I didn't do anything! Please, stop bowing to me!"

The male looks up at you from his 90Â° bow. "But you're the reason I can go home, aren't you?"

You freeze at his words, then exhale loudly, running a shaky hand through your (hair color) locks. "I guess I am, if you put it that way."

"Thank you! I think I speak for his parents as well as for him when I say that, but really. Thank you, Lady (First Name)."

"You knew his parents before, yeah?"

The general nods. "Why?"

"Then you knew him as a little boy, right? What was he like? Was he always soâ€| brutish? Rough? Easily angered? Annoying?"

"He was actually very sweet," Sawamura laughs. "He always followed me around and asked me to teach him stuff about the military. Young Kageyama was really eager to learn about it all â€" he even asked King Oikawa of Aoba Jousai to tutor him in strategies. They were like brothers before and he idolized Oikawa, that he did."

You cock your head and pretend to rub your chin like an old man, assuming your thinking pose. "He sounds so cute back then. Where did he go wrong?"

"In all honesty, I'm not sure. Maybe we spoiled him too much, or perhaps Oikawa snapped? He can only take so much. In all honesty, I don't entirely know the answer to that question."

"Knock knock! Time's up."

You turn to glance back at the door, where the voice came from and where Kuroo now stands. His dangerous feline smile dances on his lips, his bedhead hairdo pressed against the doorframe. His legs are crossed as he leans against the door and he gestures towards you with a beckoning finger. "Lady (First Name), it's time for dinner."

"Can General Sawamura join us?"

Kuroo narrows his eyes at the male sitting across from you, scrutinizing him from head to toe before clucking once. "General, since you are to be released into their custody soon, I see no reason to refuse. Join us for dinner. My lady, your carriage will be readied

while you eat and your party shall depart for Karasuno tomorrow morning. It was a pleasure meeting you."

\* \* \*

><p>It's midday when you reach the Karasuno castle, probably around 11am or 12pm. You flop back onto your bed in your old room, eyeing the withered roses sitting on your bedside table. "I should get somebody to change the water and get new roses."</p>

A knock sounds at your door. "(First Name)."

You immediately stiffen at the voice. \_King Kageyama. \_"What do you want?"

"Open the door."

"Why? What do you want?"

"I said, open the door."

"Answer the question. What do you want?"

There's silence on his end before you hear a resigned sigh. "I want to talk to you. About stuff. So open the door."

You stand up and pad over to the entryway, slowly pulling it open.

In front of you stands the king, hair flying all over the place, cheeks tinted a rough shade of pink, collar disheveled, shirt cuffs wrinkled and creased. His lips are pulled into a pout and his eyes flicker to yours briefly before he glances down at the floor again.

"This is for you." He shoves a teddy bear into your arms (the same one you returned to him). It's holding six red roses, the de-thorned flowers held together with a (favorite color) silk ribbon tied in an elegant bow. Hanging from the silk ribbon is a simple gold wedding band.

Suddenly given a teddy bear holding many items, you almost drop it but manage to keep your grip on it. You stare down at it, then glance back up at your fiancÃ©. "This bear is a mess, you know?"

He pushes past you and stalks into your room. "I know."

"Is this your way of saying sorry?"

"Would you prefer another method?" He turns to look at you, a horrifying grin plastered across his face.

"Just stop smiling. That's enough of an 'I'm sorry' present," you murmur, floating past the hurt king to the vase with the roses in it. You take the crystal vessel and place it on the floor next to the table, then proceed to separate the six roses from the plush; you place the flowers down next to your bed.

Having finished that, you untie the ring from the ribbon and slide it onto your left ring finger. It hangs loosely from your digit. "It's a

bit big, Kageyama."

He flushes. "It's not like I could measure your finger."

You glance over at his hands, clenched into fists on his lap. A matching metal band is visible on his left ring finger as well and you sit next to him, hugging your teddy to your chest as you place your left hand on his.

"Thanks, Kageyama."

\* \* \*

><p>It's been half a year since you got that engagement ring from your fiancÃ©, half a year with minimal fighting, half a year without much drama happening in the country. It's been a peaceful half a year, that much is true.</p>

As the future queen of the country and as the advisor of the king, you've been taking audiences with Karasuno's citizens for the past few months. They seem to like coming to you, since you have the power to induce change (being the king's fiancÃ© and advisor) and since you're relatable and easy to talk to (since you were a normal resident before, once upon a time).

"Lady (First Name), a citizen requests an audience with you."

"Alright! Send them right in!" You lean back in your chair in the royal audience chamber, stretching your arms and legs before sitting upright to greet the citizen that just walked in. "Hi! Please have a seat," you say, gesturing to the plush chair in front of you. "How can I help you?"

The old lady hobbles to the chair and gently eases herself into it, resting her gnarled wooden cane in her lap. "Good afternoon, Lady (First Name). I actually have a question for you about the Karasuno military."

Your ears perk up. The military hasn't been up to much, aside from its regular training. "What regarding it concerns you?"

"I'm an old woman, you see â€“ I'm almost 80 and I love my family very much. I love my son very much, I love my daughter-in-law very much, and I love my grandchildren very much."

You nod, jotting something down in your notepad before returning your focus back to her. "Go on."

"There's a new military draft and I'm afraid that my son will be drafted. Why do we need it? We just got out of a war with Nekoma recently â€“ are we going to war again, Lady (First Name)? I just want to know why. My son has a family, and ever since my husband died, he's the only one I have. I don't want to lose him, but if we have to go to warâ€!" she shakes her head, squeezing her eyes shut and gripping her cane tightly. "I only wish to know why there's a draft, my lady, if that's not too much to ask."

\_There's a draft? \_ "I will look into the reason why, ma'am, I promise." You stand and walk over to the hunched over grandmother,

taking her hands into yours as you meet her anxious gaze with your determined one. "I will find out why and I will tell you. Until now I was unaware of the draft, so the king must have acted on his own to order it. But as soon as I find out why, you will be the first to know."

She nods, smiling. "I'm glad the country is in capable hands like yours, my lady."

"Thank you. What is your name? I will be in contact with you," you murmur, going back to your chair to get your pen and paper.

"Ukai. I live in town" ask for Grandma Ukai and anybody will be able to show you the way." The old lady nods at you and begins her slow walk out of the chamber. "Thank you for your help, my lady."

You watch her back recede into the distance until the grand doors slam shut behind her. "I thought drafts were illegalâ€| what did Kageyama do this time?"

#### 14. Chapter 14

##### \*\*Chapter Fourteen: A War of Deception\*\*

You rest your chin in your hands as you watch your fiancÃ© bulldoze through the meal set in front of him. "Hey, Kageyama."

He glances up at you, eyes shifting about the room before they settle on your face. "Yes?" His grip on the silverware is tight, his fingers clenching the knife like a weapon before him.

"How are you?"

"â€|fine." The king glances down at his plate, cuts a piece of broccoli, and puts it gingerly into his mouth. He winces a bit, but swallows the vegetable.

"How's the kingdom?"

Kageyama looks back up at you and stares at you, holding your gaze for perhaps 10 seconds before dropping it. "Fine." He stabs another small green tree and chomps down on it, eyes squeezing shut in a brief moment of regret before he chews and swallows.

"What about the army?"

He freezes. "What about it?"

"Is it fine? How's it doing? Any new recruits?"

He picks up another broccoli piece and eats it, shoveling rice into his mouth promptly afterwards. "It's fine."

"Are you sure it's fine? Anybody new, anybody interesting?"

"No."

"Really?"

Your fiancÃ© wipes his lips with a napkin and drops the silverware on the porcelain plate; it clinks loudly against the china, the sound echoing throughout the large dining room. "Yes." He stands and pushes his seat back, the legs of the chair squeaking in a wince-inducing sound.

"Where are you going?" You're leaning on the table now, resting your chin in your hands as you narrow your eyes at Kageyama.

He's already on his way out of the hall as he responds. "My room. I'm tired."

You watch him stalk out of the room and slam the door behind him. Your face meets the wood of the table as you let out a sigh. "Great. Now he knows I'm onto him. Subtle. Go me."

\* \* \*

><p>"Sugawara!" Spotting the butler's trademark mop of silver hair weaving down the hallway, you sprint after him and flag him down. "Sugawara, wait!"</p>

He turns, cocking his head at you as his mouth rounds into a small "o." "What is it, my lady?"

You hold up a hand, your torso hunched over your knees and your chest heaving up and down as you breathe heavily. "Sugawaraâ€¦ Sugawara, hey, did you know?"

"Know about what?" He shifts the silver platter he's holding from his left to his right hand, scratching the side of his head as he does so.

"The draft," you say, standing up straight and running a hand through your (hair color) locks. "There's a draft, and Kageyama didn't tell me about it."

"Did you confront him?"

"Of course! What else was I supposed to do?"

The butler shrugs and lets out a sigh. "Not sure. How'd you hear about it?"

"A nice little old lady requested an audience with me and wanted to ask about the reasoning behind the draft. She was sweet, but it was dreadfully embarrassing that I didn't know about the draft, much less our daft king's reason for it." You cross your arms at the statement, puffing out your cheeks and glaring at the cream walls. "I don't think Kageyama's going to give me a straight answer."

"Have you tried General Sawamura?"

Your eyes light up as you stand up straight, hitting the palm of your hand with your closed fist. "That's it! You're a genius, Sugawara! Thank you!"

"He's in his room, I believe. Just down the hall, turn left, and keep

going straight for about a 100 meters or so."

You sprint off in the direction the silver-haired male points in, soon skidding to a stop in front of a simple, plain wood door. Inscribed above the door handle in a dull bronze plaque are a few words reading: "General Daichi Sawamura."

Raising a tentative fist to knock on the door, you steel up your courage and rap on it several times. "General Sawamura?"

A voice comes from inside. "Who is it?"

"(First Name/Last Name). Can I talk to you about some stuff?"

"Come in. The door's unlocked."

You grip the doorknob and push the door open, stepping into the general's room. "General Sawamura!"

"Take a seat," he says, gesturing at the empty chair next to his desk. He's hunched over the wooden table, leafing through a giant pile of documents before he puts his ink pen down and turns to face you. "What can I do for you?"

"Oh, fun. I have to explain the situation all over again. Do you mind?"

"Sure?"

"So I had an audience with this delightful little old lady a few days ago and she was curious about Karasuno's draft."

"What about the draft?" His dark eyes watch you as you lean back into the chair, stretching out like a cat. Sunlight streams in through the open window in front of his desk, hitting his face from the side and illuminating his side profile.

"She wanted to know why we had it. She pointed out that we just got out of a war with Nekoma a while ago, but she also wanted to know that since we have a draft, if we be going to war again."

"What'd you say?"

You sling your arm over your eyes, shielding them from the bright light coming in from the window. "I said I didn't know that we had a draft."

"You didn't know? I thought you had authorized it!"

You sit up straight in the chair, leaning forward as your fingers form a steeple. Regarding the general with a cool gaze, you murmur, "You think I would authorize a draft for no apparent reason? We're not being threatened, at least not by anybody I can think of."

"So you didn't know about it!" He falls back into his chair, running a hand through his short black hair before sighing loudly. "His Royal Highness told me you were aware of it, however, and that you told him to go ahead with it."

"Well, His Royal Highness was lying. General Sawamura, do you know of

any reason why the king could want this draft? Who might he want to attack?"

"Your guess is as good as mine," the man sitting in front of you shrugs. "I think he said something about building up the army in case we get attacked by somebody, but is that really feasible?"

"Hardly. Diplomatic relations between us and our neighbors are at the best that they've been at in the past 10 years. There's no reason for us to be attacked, at least not by a country directly neighboring us."

"I thought drafts were illegal."

"He's the king," you mutter, hands forming tight fists as they clench the bottom of your shirt. "He can do whatever the bloody hell he pleases, and there's nobody to stop him."

"You can," Sawamura offers. "You're his fiancÃ©e."

"I'm his \_fiancÃ©e. \_I can't do jack shit â€“ I'm not married to him yet. I'm not even sure I \_want \_to marry the guy now."

"When you do marry him, though, you can help rule, can't you?"

"Isn't that what my job is, though, as advisor to the king? To help rule the kingdom?" You stand up and cross your arms, kicking the edge of the carpet that's sticking up. "What a great job I'm doing, steering the country into the wrong direction. I can't even keep the king in check."

"Then what are you going to do?"

"Something."

"What about the draft, my lady?"

"Stop the draft and let the men who want to go home to go home. Those who want to stay can stay and continue training, but it has to be of their own free will, without any threats or bribes."

The general bows before you. "Of course. And about the king's reasons for the draft?"

"I confronted him at breakfast today. He's going to be wary, so I'll confront him againâ€| at a later date. Maybe when he's less on-edge around me. In the meanwhile, I'll watch him and act like everything's normal. Thank you for meeting with me, General Sawamura." You stride out of the room, taking care to close the door quietly behind you when you exit.

\* \* \*

><p>"Tobio Kageyama!" You fling open the door to the king's room, standing in the doorway with your hands on your hips.<p>

A voice groans and a figure sits up on his bed. "(Last Name)? What do you want?" He rubs his eyes sleepily, a scowl adorning his face.

"Wake up! I have to talk to you about something!"

"I'm not in the mood right now," he mutters, glaring off to the side at something on the ground.

"I don't care. I need to talk to you about it," you say, walking over and plopping yourself down on his bed. You lean forwards until your nose is barely two or three centimeters from his, then nod and cross your arms across your chest. "My Royal Highness, tell me about the draft you've authorized."

He freezes, his grip on the blanket edge tightening until his knuckles turn an off-white color. His face drains and his cheeks are pallid, but he still glares at you indignantly. "What of it?"

"Why?"

"What do you mean, why?"

"Why do you want this draft?"

"Reasons," he mutters, swinging his legs to the side of the bed and standing up. "Hey, (Last Name)!"

"Why? Tell me the reason, Kageyama."

"Don't you have a wedding to start preparing for?" He points at the engagement ring on your ring finger. "Wedding planners are here, you know. They're available to help."

"Why do I have to plan this weddiâ€"wait, you're not steering me off course! Tell me why!"

"Wedding first. After the wedding, I'll tell you."

"That's too late, you stupid king!"

A soft knock comes at the door. "Lady (First Name)? King Kageyama?"

"Sugawara," the onyx-haired male calls. "What?"

The butler looks at the two of you, seated on the king's bed, before continuing: "My lady, you have to start preparing for your weddiâ€""

"Yes, yes, I know, I know," you mutter, waving a hand in the air to shut Sugawara up as you shoot a death glare at the king. "Did you time this, Kageyama? Did you call Sugawara in here just to get me out?"

"I don't have any magic powers," he retorts, snorting. "I can't just materialize him out of thin air to get you out of my room."

"Lady (First Name), let's get going," Sugawara murmurs, tapping your shoulder lightly. "You need to begin discussing the wedding concept first."

"Do you have any preferences, My Royal Highness?" Your voice drips with sarcasm as you stare at him, dropping into a low curtsy and jutting out your jaw at the male. "Any concept you'd like, oh wonderful king of mine? The wedding's in a few months; you should tell me your input before I start planning the whole thing."

"No." He stands up and turns to face the window, his back to you.  
"Leave."

"Sugawara, why is my fiancÃ© so mean to me?" You practically pout at the butler.

"I'm not sure, my lady. I believe he's just doing his best. He has your best interests at heart, does he not?"

"How a draft relates to that I have no idea," you mutter, kicking the edge of the bed frame before storming out of the room. "Let's start, Sugawara. Oh, and Kageyama, this conversation is far from over."

\* \* \*

><p>Months have passed in the blink of an eye, your time consumed by work and wedding planning. You haven't seen your fiancÃ© all that much during that time, which is fine by you â€“ you have Sugawara to help take care of him so you can waste less time running after the boy king aimlessly.</p>

You fall back into your chair and cross your legs, watching the grand doors in front of you open to let a person into the room.

"Lady (First Name)! I'm so happy for you!" A young lady practically runs into your audience chamber, squealing loudly. "Your wedding is so soon â€“ aren't you excited?"

You shrug, a bit overwhelmed by her enthusiasm for a wedding that isn't even hers. "I suppose? I mean, I've been so busy with work that I barely have time to plan for the wedding," you laugh. "It's in two weeks, though, so I guess it is tantalizingly close."

"Oh, my lady, how wonderful! You and the king are such a perfect couple!"

"Thank you," you murmur. "Please, take a seat. Is there anything else you would like to discuss that I can help you with?"

She shakes her head, eyes sparkling as she watches you. Instead of sitting, she draws closer to you. "I just wanted to talk to you about your wedding and to congratulate you on it! Ah, you'll look so cute together, I can't wait!"

"Thank you, thank you."

"I'm so happy I could have this audience with you~ Thank you! Have a lovely wedding!" She waves goodbye at you as she skips across the tiled floor to the exit.

You let go of the giant breath you were holding and slouch further into the chair, running a hand through your (hair color) tresses.

"My lady, would you like to take a break?" A soldier asks you from the shadows, his eyebrows furrowed in worry.

"No, I'm fine. Bring in the next person, please."

\* \* \*

><p>You stand outside the grand ballroom, staring at it.</p>

The room is decorated in shades of pastel orange and an eggshell white, contrasting the black decals and borders of the walls. White tablecloths and cantaloupe-colored napkins dotted the room, with similarly colored streamers hanging from the ceiling. Pale orange roses with white baby's breath flowers fill bouquets all over, and the black wood paneling on the floor provide an excellent complement to the overall room.

Your wedding is in two weeks, and you're still at a loss for what to do; turning to your head wedding planner, you murmur, "What now?"

Your wedding planner shrugs. "Coordinate the clothing, perhaps? Do you have your wedding dress picked out? You can do that."

"Oh! Sugawara can help me with that!"

"Care for me to go get him?" Your planner asks.

"If you would be so kind to, yes. Thank you."

She leaves the room, allowing you to pull out a black mahogany chair and sink into it. Your head is reeling and you feel like you're about to retch. Allowing yourself these few minutes to think alone makes you realize the amount of work you've had to do recently and you inhale, then exhale loudly. You rub your eyes, but you can't seem to stay awake as your lids grow heavier and heavier.

"Lady (First Name)!"

You start, jerking yourself awake and almost falling off of your chair. "W-What? Oh, General Sawamura, what's up?"

He's huffing and puffing, out of breath; his cheeks are sparsely colored, his dark hair in a messy disarray as he hunches over, resting his hands on his knees. "Lady (First Name), oh, you won't believe what's happenedâ€¦ or rather, what's going to happen!"

"Talk, Sawamura, talk! What's going on?"

"The king, my lady, it's the king!"

You perk up instantly at the mention of your fiancÃ©, your body tensing. "Is this about the draft?"

"Somewhat. The king is planning on invading Aoba Jousai."

\*\*Chapter Fifteen: Anamnesis\*\*

"Kageyama is invading Aoba Jousai?" You bolt upright immediately, searching his eyes for any hint that this might be a joke and that the king isn't just an idiot.

Sawamura nods and you press a palm to your forehead, sighing loudly as the idea that Kageyama is an idiot begins to sink in. "Is he serious about this?"

"He seemed to be," comes the general's terse reply. "I overheard it when he was talking to himself as he walked down the hall. Do you have any idea why he might do that, my lady?"

"I have no idea," you groan. "No idea at all. He can't possibly plan to attack King Oikawa before the wedding, right? That's in two weeksâ€¦ there's no way he'd be able to conquer the land and make it back in time to marry me. Is that reasonable of me to think so, Sawamura?"

He nods. "Yes. If he wants a successful invasion with new lands annexed, it will take at least three months, given that he wants to go up against Aoba Jousai."

"Karasuno's just recently recovered from the war, too. This is great. Just great."

"Is that sarcasm, my lady?"

"What else could it be?" Your hand slides down your face as you slump into a chair, worry and frustration etched clearly on your features. "I'm going to get white hairs from him, I swear."

"What do you suggest we do?" He wrings his hands as he watches your slouched form fall even further into the chair at the mere suggestion of having to deal with your husband-to-be."

You run a hand through your messy (hair color) locks and force yourself to sit upright in the chair, crossing your legs and resting your forearms on the chair's arm rests. "Why don't we watch him for now? We have two weeks before he'll act upon his words and invade Aoba Jousai. Let's see what he does and if he's doing anything more suspicious. Have you noticed anything recently, Sawamura?"

He shakes his head. "No, my lady. I've been busy training the troops and whatnot. You?"

"Wedding planning takes its toll on you, you know. You'd think that as queen-to-be, I'd have more help, but nope. Not at all. I haven't had the time to function properly, much less notice anything. I'll go call Sugawara and see what he says." You stand up and make your way to the door, opening it and stepping out. Before you close it entirely, you turn around to gaze at the general. "Keep an eye out for any suspicious behavior, okay?"

The general salutes you, and you close the door behind you as you enter the hallway. Looking left and right, you decide to go left and walk down the halls, calling the butler's name loudly in the hope that he hears you.

\* \* \*

><p>You fall upon your bed, pulling the blankets up to your chin and closing your eyes hesitantly. Kageyama sleeps soundly beside you as you toss and turn, eventually settling on lying on your side, facing away from your fiancÃ©.</p>

"Kageyamaâ€œ!" Your lips form his name but no sound escapes. "Sawamura saw nothing, and Sugawara didn't notice anything, either."

The king turns towards you, tugging at the comforter as he cocoons himself into an elongated burrito.

Glancing back at him, you heave a sigh as you glance over your shoulder to make sure that he's still asleep. "I'll have to be careful. If I act carelesslyâ€œ all will go to hell." You close your eyes, letting your vision spin for a minute or so before it calms down and settles.

You breathe in, inhaling the wispy fragrance of roses that lingers in the room you share with the king. The thin silk sheets scrunch slightly under your tight clutch as you allow your mouth to fall open a bit, your head resting on a pillow so that your side profile is visible. The canopy hanging above you and your fiancÃ© shields the two of you from the harshest of the moon's white rays, but still allows a sliver of light to glance upon your countenance, still facing away from your husband.

A sudden movement from behind you rouses you from your half-awake, half-asleep limbo. Your eyes fly open and you're about to groan when you catch yourself, stilling your movements as you feel cool air rush under the covers. Kageyama's making his move.

The bed creaks a bit as he heaves his legs over the side of it and stands, doing his best to avoid waking the "sleeping" you. Fabric rustling softly, you hear footsteps softly padding over to your side of the bed; you shut your eyes quickly and try to slow your breathing, attempting to make it at least seem like you were asleep.

Long fingers dance on your cheek before they cup your chin and pull it gently towards the culprit's face. Allowing your eyes to open just a sliver, you watch as the silhouette reaches out to brush a clump of hair off your forehead. A soft ray of light shining in from the moon falls on your face, blinding you momentarily before the light disappears, your vision now blocked by your fiancÃ©'s head.

He tucks the hair behind your ear and presses a light kiss to your forehead, making your eyes fly open before you remember that you're supposed to be \_asleep \_and shut them again. Withdrawing from your still figure, Kageyama reaches over and gives you a somewhat awkward pat on the head, followed by lingering digits that don't seem to want to leave your cheeks but eventually do.

The door closes with a soft click and you finally allow yourself to open your eyes, first raising a hand to your forehead, then to your cheek, which is feeling a bit colder and lonelier now. "Kageyama," you whisper, the name finally escaping your lips like a soft spring breeze. A question falls from your tongue, almost as an afterthought: "Where are you going?"

Swinging your legs over the elegant wooden bed frame, you wrap a thin jacket around your shoulders before grabbing a candle, lighting it, and following your fianc into the hallway.

\* \* \*

><p>You stay a good distance behind the male, taking care to cover your candle when need be, lest its light reveal you.</p>

Kageyama makes his way down to the stables, where he perches on a wooden fencepost outside the barn underneath the stars. You make your way down the steps to stand a bit away from him, around a corner but still underneath the same ethereal lights.

A chill breeze blows and you wrap your jacket tighter around you, cursing yourself for not putting on proper clothes before you chased the king out  but who'd have known that he'd head outside? Shaking your head, you peek around the building corner.

The lights twinkle overhead, small white beacons in a wide expanse of unwavering inky onyx. An off-white moon shines brightly, illuminating the elegantly sharp side profile of the king. The subtle curvatures and dips and hills of his face are highlighted by the soft light as his favorite black jacket flutters from his shoulders. He looks calm, pensive, thoughtful  nothing like the tyrant he normally is.

"If only I could have fallen for this man, instead of that tyrant Kageyama," you mourn wistfully as you cast your gaze up to the sky, sighing before returning your gaze to the king.

He tucks a lock of hair behind his ear as he raises his face to the heavens, his jawline and side profile sharp enough to grate cheese and to make you draw a gasp. A sigh escapes Kageyama's pale lips.

You begin to turn away from the male when

"Oikawa, you will pay."

four words make you turn around and peek back at your fianc. He remains in the same pose, but only his lips are moving, albeit slowly.

"How dare you!"

You can barely make out the words, so softly does he murmur them. Despite pressing yourself against the wooden side of the barn, hoping to hear more than that, no matter how long you wait  it's probably been an hour since he first breathed those seven words  it doesn't seem like you'll get an addendum. Allowing your chest to fall as you breathe out, you wrap your jacket around your shoulders and pad quietly into the castle, back to your bedroom.

\* \* \*

><p>Two weeks have passed and the castle has been in chaos in preparation for the upcoming wedding  but the chaos is nothing compared to now, the actual day of the wedding.</p>

"Lady (First Name), are you ready?"

You turn to look at the owner of the suave voice. "Am I?" You let out a hesitant, wavering laugh in response to the butler's question. "I don't know, am I?" Holding out your hand, you stare at the engagement ring on your finger before making a fist. "Sugawara, am I?"

"I believe you are," he smiles. "You look lovely, and I'm sure he'll love it. Be confident, okay? The king is waiting at the altar, so let's go."

Your digits grip the white fabric you're dressed in, drawing the soft fabric into creases and folds. Your knuckles turn an off-white, not unlike that of the dress. "Why don't you go ahead? I think I'm going to hold off for a sec. You know, to build up the suspense." A small laugh escapes your lips, sounding hollow and forced. "I'll be out in a bit."

The butler nods. "Alright, if you say so. If you require anything, simply call." He bows before exiting the room, closing the door and walking down the hall to the church to alert the king of your coming arrival.

\* \* \*

><p>"Where is she?"</p>

"She said that she'll be here soon, Your Royal Highness." Sugawara shuffles around a bit, eyes glancing at the corners of the room as he answers the king's question.

"That was an hour ago!"

"Thirty-five minutes, actually," the silver-haired male corrects, checking his watch. "I will go check on her to make sure that she's alright."

Kageyama allows his butler to stride out of the room, allowing himself to fall into a nearby chair. Not many people are gathered at the church, as this wedding — the official one — is for the two of you. A larger one, on a grander scale, is to be held later for all the people to attend and revel in the joining of a commoner and a noble in marriage.

\* \* \*

><p>Your husband-to-be perks up at the sound of footsteps approaching, then the gentle creak of the door swinging open. "Sugawara? How'd it go? Is she alright?" He springs upwards, rising to his feet as he bounces on the balls of his feet and moves to stand next to the altar.</p>

The butler steps into the room, eyes downcast and movements slow. "Sir, I think you need to take a look yourself." He hands the king a small plush, who accepts it cautiously.

In Kageyama's arms is the teddy bear he had given you so long ago. It holds a single black rose in its left paw, along with a wrinkled piece of parchment in its right. All that's written on the note, in blotted black ink that's still wet and running, are two words:

I'm sorry.

End  
file.